



LEO STRAUSS

Plato's Republic

University of Chicago 1957



Leo Strauss

Plato's Republic (1957)

Seminar in Political Philosophy: Plato's *Republic*

A course offered in the spring quarter, 1957

Department of Political Science, The University of Chicago

Edited and with an introduction by Peter Ahrens Dorf

Peter Ahrens Dorf is James Sprunt Professor of Political Science and affiliated professor of classics at Davidson College. He is the author of *The Death of Socrates and the Life of Philosophy: An Interpretation of Plato's Phaedo* (State University of New York Press, 1995) and other works on ancient philosophy and drama.

© 1975 Joseph Cropsey

© 2014 The Estate of Leo Strauss. All Rights Reserved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editor's Introduction	i-v
The Leo Strauss Transcript Project	vi-vii
Editorial Headnote	viii
Session 1: Introduction, Book 1	1-18
Session 2: Book 1	19-34
Session 3: Book 1	35-51
Session 4: Review, book 2	52-68
Session 5: Books 2, 3	69-82
Session 6: Books 3, 4	83-100
Session 7: Book 4	101-113
Session 8: Books 4, 5	114-128
Session 9: Books 5, 6, 7	129-140
Session 10: Book 7	141-155
Session 11: Book 7	156-173
Session 12: Book 8	174-190
Session 13: Books 8, 9	191-204
Session 14: Books 9, 10	205-218
Session 15: Book 10; summary points	219-221

Introduction to Leo Strauss's 1957 Spring Seminar on Plato's *Republic*

Peter J. Ahrensdorf

Plato's *Republic* had already played a leading role in Leo Strauss's intellectual life long before he taught his seminar on that dialogue during the spring quarter of 1957. In Strauss's most famous book, *Natural Right and History* (1953), the *Republic* figures prominently in the Introduction: "Let us beware of the danger of pursuing a Socratic goal with the means, and the temper, of Thrasymachus"—and in his elucidation of the classical understanding of the best regime and the classical natural right doctrine.¹ In his most famous essay, "Persecution and the Art of Writing" (1941), Strauss frames his argument that philosophers of the past presented their teachings in a deliberately oblique, exoteric manner with references to and discussions of key passages from books 2 and 3 of the *Republic*.² Perhaps most importantly, Strauss found in Plato's image of the cave, not only a clear guide to "Plato's view of the relation between and philosophy and politics" (1946),³ but a compelling account of "[t]he natural difficulties of philosophizing" that philosophers encounter at all times everywhere (1932)⁴ and hence "the classic description of the natural obstacles to philosophy" (1948).⁵ In *Natural Right and History*, Strauss introduces the very "idea of philosophy" with an account of the cave: "Philosophizing means to ascend from the cave to the light of the sun. The cave is the world of opinion as opposed to knowledge . . . Philosophizing means, then, to ascend from public dogma to essentially private knowledge" (11-12). Strauss was even inspired by Plato's image of the cave to express in terms of that image his *own* account of the obstacles to philosophy peculiar to his *own* times: due to the distinctive prejudices of our times "we find ourselves in a second, much deeper cave than the lucky ignorant persons Socrates dealt with; we need history first of all to ascend to the cave from which Socrates can lead us to light; we need a propaedeutic, which the Greeks did not need, namely, learning through reading" (1931).⁶ Strauss reaffirmed this account of the intellectual predicament of human beings in modern times in his 1935 book *Philosophy and Law*: "only the history of philosophy makes possible the ascent from the second, 'unnatural' cave, into which we have fallen"⁷—and in his 1948 essay on Spinoza—"People may become so frightened of the ascent to the light of the sun, and so desirous of making that ascent utterly impossible to any of their descendants, that they dig a deep pit beneath the cave into which they were born, and withdraw into that pit."⁸

Yet even though Strauss discussed the *Republic* in detail in numerous works published prior to 1957,⁹ at the time of his 1957 seminar Strauss had not yet published a commentary on the *Republic* or indeed on any Platonic dialogue. Strauss went on to publish commentaries on seven dialogues: first, relatively short, separate commentaries on *The Republic*, the *Statesman*, and the *Laws* in his chapter on Plato in *The History of Political Philosophy* (1963); then, a longer commentary on the *Republic* in the *City and Man* (1964);¹⁰ and later, commentaries on the *Minos* (1968), on the *Euthydemus* (1970), and on the *Apology* and the *Crito* (1976), and a book on the *Laws* (1975).¹¹

Strauss's remarks in his 1957 seminar on the *Republic* foreshadow in many respects his *City and Man* essay. More specifically, the first seven class sessions here anticipate in many ways his discussion in that essay of how to read a Platonic dialogue and his detailed commentary on the first four books of the dialogue (50-116).

The most noteworthy and interesting feature of Strauss's 1957 *Republic* seminar is the attention it pays to books 5-10 of the dialogue. While 22 of 88 pages of the *City and Man* essay are devoted to books 5-10 of the *Republic* (116-138), roughly half of the class sessions are devoted to those books (the middle of session 8 through session 15). Moreover, while only 12 of the 88 pages of the *City and Man* essay (or less than one-seventh) are devoted to books 5-7 (116-128)—those books Strauss apparently refers to in the essay when remarking, "That part of the *Republic* that deals with philosophy is the most important part of the book" (127)—three and a half sessions (the middle of session 8 through session 11) out of 15 (almost one quarter) are devoted to those books, of which Strauss says in the seminar, "The center and peak of the *Republic* is the discussion of philosophy¹² [from] the middle of book five until the end of book seven" (session 14). Perhaps most importantly, whereas Strauss devotes less than three of 88 pages to Plato's famous Doctrine of Ideas in his *City and Man* essay (118-121), six of the fifteen sessions of Strauss's seminar discuss at considerable length that very doctrine. Indeed, session 10 is entirely devoted to a discussion of the Idea of the Good, a topic barely mentioned by Strauss in his *City and Man* essay (119). Classical scholars have criticized Strauss's interpretation of Plato for neglecting Plato's Theory of Ideas, but such a criticism simply cannot be made of his 1957 seminar.¹³

The *Republic* seminar also presents fascinating and detailed discussions of the Bible (sessions 10, 12, 13), Aristotle's *Physics* (session 11), and of thinkers whom Strauss hardly mentions in his *City and Man* essay on the *Republic*, if at all: Kant (sessions 10, 11, 13), Hegel (sessions 9, 10, 11), Heidegger (session 10), Schelling (session 10), and Tocqueville (session 12).

One theme that Strauss focuses on more obviously in the seminar than in the *City of Man* essay is that of the grave theoretical difficulties that beset the philosophic quest for wisdom and the deeply problematic incompleteness of that quest. In the following excerpts, for example, Strauss emphasizes what he had earlier referred to in his 1932 manuscript, "Die geistige Lage der Gegenwart," as the "natural difficulties of philosophizing," and the political and theoretical consequences of those difficulties:

If full knowledge of the idea of the good as it would be needed is not available, then the rule of philosophy will not be possible. Aside from the great problem of philosophers and rule, there is the intrinsic problem of the incompleteness of philosophy. If this is so, the conflict between the city and philosophy cannot be resolved (session 9).

The beauty of the *Republic* is this—the *Republic* is not only a political utopia but at the same time a philosophical utopia . . . The beauty of the *Republic* is that it presents a political utopia which is impossible because the philosophic utopia is impossible. I think this is the deepest nerve of the argument of the *Republic*. First we have the political utopia, that which our hearts or our consciences desire. Then we see that this in itself requires philosophy. What the completion of philosophy would mean is sketched. Then it

is suggested to us that this completion is impossible. Thus this description of what philosophy in its perfection would be is utopian. Therefore, the political utopia is a utopia¹⁴ (session 9).

Certainly the first part of the statement—that philosophy presupposes the whole is intelligible—is essential if philosophy is to be possible. Our question is clear. How does Plato try to establish the basic premise of philosophy? (session 10)

Plato treats what we call natural science in a dialogue called the *Timaeus*. He presents natural science there not as a science but as a likely tale.¹⁵ That is one of the deepest difficulties for Plato—to find the possibility of a true science of things which come into being and perish. This is really an infinite problem (session 11).

Philosophy essentially regards its presuppositions as problems. It cannot be dogmatic in this sense. It cannot simply accept these presuppositions and not see a problem in them (session 11).

Another striking feature of these sessions is the capital importance in Strauss's eyes of one thinker in particular whom he barely mentions in the *City and Man*: Kant (89, 128n).¹⁶ In Strauss's discussions here, Kant and Plato constitute, in important ways, *the* fundamental theoretical alternatives.

This is the meaning of science. It supplies a frame of reference which in principle can be common to all men as men. Now there are two ways of conceiving this natural frame of reference, if I may call it this for the moment. One is the Kantian way, the other the Platonic way. Kant says there is a natural frame of reference which is given by the structure of the human mind. This implies that distinction between the thing in itself and the phenomenon. This whole perception or understanding through this natural frame of reference is relative to man. The Platonic assertion is the opposite. This natural frame of reference is identical with the inner order of the whole. We are by nature aware dimly of the essential structure of the whole (session 11).

Both admit the empirical fact that we do not possess complete knowledge of the truth. But what is the difference? For Kant there exist assignable limits to human knowledge. Only phenomena can be known. The things in themselves, as he calls them, cannot be known. For Plato there is no such line clearly separating the knowable from the unknowable. There are always levels and we cannot define a limit to human knowledge. There are no principles known to us by which we could establish such a limit. This is the first difference (session 11).

Whether Plato is right in identifying that transcending thing with philosophy or whether it would not have to be identified in the biblical way or perhaps the Kantian way, presents the most serious question (session 11).

Strauss's discussions in his 1957 seminar of what one might call the "metaphysical" Plato—the Plato who devised the Theory of Ideas, the Plato of books 5-7 of the *Republic*, the Plato who

seems the classical counterpart to Kant—are extremely intriguing, thought-provoking, and suggestive. Yet Strauss chose not to include these discussions in his final, 1964 essay on Plato's *Republic* in the *City and Man*. It is therefore not clear how much weight students and scholars interested in Strauss's understanding of Plato in particular or in his thought as a whole should place on these discussions. Perhaps it is safest to observe that, in the course of this seminar, Strauss stresses to his students the provisional character of his comments. For example, in the context of an especially riveting, illuminating, and beguiling discussion of Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Parmenides, Thomas Aquinas, Averroes, Heidegger, unicorns, philosophy, the biblical God, the elusive character of being, the possible limits of knowledge, and the possibly intelligible character of the whole, Strauss makes the following remark:

But please don't misunderstand me. If you think what I said comes even within hailing distance of an adequate statement of the issue between the Bible and Greek philosophy, I must disavow that (session 10).

¹ *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 6, 135-140, 144.

² "Persecution and the Art of Writing," *Social Science Research* 8:4 (November 1941); reprinted in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952), 22, 35-36. Compare also "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing," *Chicago Review* 8:1 (Winter-Spring 1954); reprinted in *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959), 221-222 with *Natural Right and History*, 11-12.

³ "On a New Interpretation of Plato's Political Philosophy," *Social Research* 13:3 (September 1946), 354-355.

⁴ "Die geistige Lage der Gegenwart" (1932), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, ed. Heinrich Meier (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997), 456; "The Intellectual Situation of the Present," trans. Anna Schmidt and Martin D. Yaffe, in *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930s*, ed. Martin D. Yaffe and Richard S. Ruderman (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 248.

⁵ "How to Study Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise*," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 17 (1948); reprinted in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 155. See also *Philosophy and Law: Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors*, trans. Eve Adler (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 126-127, 140.

⁶ "Review of Julius Ebbinghaus, *On the Progress of Metaphysics*" (1931) in *Leo Strauss: the Early Writings (1921-1932)*, trans. and ed. Michael Zank (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 215. For Strauss's first allusion to the idea of a cave beneath the cave, see his 1930 lecture, "Religiöse Lage der Gegenwart" (1930), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, 389; "Religious Situation of the Present," trans. Anna Schmidt and Martin D. Yaffe, in *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930s*, ed. Martin D. Yaffe and Richard S. Ruderman (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 235: "we are yet much further down than Plato's cave dwellers."

⁷ *Philosophy and Law*, 136. See also 57-58.

⁸ *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 155-156.

⁹ See also, for example, "On a New Interpretation of Plato's Political Philosophy," 349-351, 353-355, 359-362.

¹⁰ "Plato" in *The History of Political Philosophy*, edited with Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963), 7-63 (*Republic*, 8-41; *Statesman*, 42-51; *Laws*, 51-61); "On Plato's *Republic*," in *City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964, 1992), 50-138. In the preface to the *City and Man*, Strauss refers to the discussion of the *Republic* in the "Plato" chapter as an "earlier and shorter version" of the later and longer essay.

¹¹ "On the *Minos*," in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 65-75; "On the

Euthydemus,” *Interpretation* 1:1 (1970), 1-20; reprinted in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); “On Plato’s *Apology of Socrates* and *Crito*,” in *Essays in Honor of Jacob Klein* (Annapolis: St. John’s College, 1976), 155-170; reprinted in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*; *The Argument and the Action of Plato’s Laws* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

¹² Deleted “form.”

¹³ See, for example, Myles Burnyeat, “Sphinx without a Secret,” *New York Review of Books*, May 30, 1985, 32. For an appreciative account of Strauss’s interpretation of Plato by a classical scholar, see G.R.F. Ferrari, “Strauss’s Plato,” *Arion: A Journal of the Humanities and the Classics* 5:2 (Fall 1977), 36-65.

¹⁴ Compare Strauss’s statement here with that in “On a New Interpretation of Plato’s Political Philosophy,” 362 n49: “The *Republic*, one could say, is deliberately ‘utopian,’ not merely regarding politics but likewise regarding philosophy: the citizens and rulers that it envisages are ‘gods’ or ‘sons of gods’ (*Laws*, 739d6). But whereas the political utopia cannot guide political action (except in the vague sense of ‘inspiring’ it), the philosophic utopia can and must guide philosophic ‘action.’ In other words, whereas there are no examples of a genuine ‘political order’ (compare *Statesman* 293 c5-7), there are a number of examples of genuine philosophers.”

¹⁵ *Timaeus* 29c4-d6

¹⁶ For a discussion of Strauss’s *City and Man* essay that stresses the importance of Kant in the essay, see G.R.F. Ferrari, “Strauss’s Plato,” *Arion* 5:2 (1997), 36-65, especially 48-56.

The Leo Strauss Transcript Project

Leo Strauss is well known as a thinker and writer, but he also had tremendous impact as a teacher. In the transcripts of his courses one can see Strauss commenting on texts, including many he wrote little or nothing about, and responding generously to student questions and objections. The transcripts, amounting to more than twice the volume of Strauss's published work, will add immensely to the material available to scholars and students of Strauss's work.

In the early 1950s mimeographed typescripts of student notes of Strauss's courses were distributed among his students. In winter 1954, the first recording, of his course on Natural Right, was transcribed and distributed to students. Professor Herbert J. Storing obtained a grant from the Relm Foundation to support the taping and transcription, which resumed on a regular basis in the winter of 1956 with Strauss's course "Historicism and Modern Relativism." Of the 39 courses Strauss taught at the University of Chicago from 1958 until his departure in 1968, 34 were recorded and transcribed. After Strauss retired from the University, recording of his courses continued at Claremont Men's College in the spring of 1968 and the fall and spring of 1969 (although the tapes for his last two courses there have not been located), and at St. John's College for the four years until his death in October 1973.

The surviving original audio recordings vary widely in quality and completeness.; and after they had been transcribed, the audiotapes were sometimes reused, leaving the audio record very incomplete. Over time the audiotape deteriorated. Beginning in the late 1990s, Stephen Gregory, then the administrator of the University's John M. Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy funded by the John M. Olin Foundation, initiated the digital remastering of the surviving tapes by Craig Harding of September Media to ensure their preservation, improve their audibility, and make possible their eventual publication. This remastering received financial support from the Olin Center and a grant from the Division of Preservation and Access of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The surviving audiofiles are available at the Strauss Center website: <https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/courses>.

Strauss permitted the taping and transcribing to go forward, but he did not check the transcripts or otherwise participate in the project. Accordingly, Strauss's close associate and colleague Joseph Cropsey originally put the copyright in his own name, though he assigned copyright to the Estate of Leo Strauss in 2008. Beginning in 1958 a headnote was placed at the beginning of each transcript, which read: "This transcription is a written record of essentially oral material, much of which developed spontaneously in the classroom and none of which was prepared with publication in mind. The transcription is made available to a limited number of interested persons, with the understanding that no use will be made of it that is inconsistent with the private and partly informal origin of the material. Recipients are emphatically requested not to seek to increase the circulation of the transcription. This transcription has not been checked, seen, or passed on by the lecturer." In 2008, Strauss's heir, his daughter Jenny Strauss, asked Nathan Tarcov to succeed Joseph Cropsey as Strauss's literary executor. They agreed that because of the widespread circulation of the old, often inaccurate and incomplete transcripts and the continuing interest in Strauss's thought and teaching, it would be a service to interested scholars and students to proceed with publication of the remastered audiofiles and transcripts. They were

encouraged by the fact that Strauss himself signed a contract with Bantam Books to publish four of the transcripts although in the end none were published.

The University's Leo Strauss Center, established in 2008, launched a project, presided over by its director Nathan Tarcov and managed by Stephen Gregory, to correct the old transcripts on the basis of the remastered audiofiles as they became available, transcribe those audiofiles not previously transcribed, and annotate and edit for readability all the transcripts including those for which no audiofiles survived. This project was supported by grants from the Winiarski Family Foundation, Mr. Richard S. Shiffrin and Mrs. Barbara Z. Schiffrin, Earhart Foundation, and the Hertog Foundation, and contributions from numerous other donors. The Strauss Center was ably assisted in its fundraising efforts by Nina Botting-Herbst and Patrick McCusker, staff in the Office of the Dean of the Division of the Social Sciences at the University.

Senior scholars familiar with both Strauss's work and the texts he taught were commissioned as editors, with preliminary work done in most cases by student editorial assistants. The goal in editing the transcripts has been to preserve Strauss's original words as much as possible while making the transcripts easier to read. Strauss's impact (and indeed his charm) as a teacher is revealed in the sometimes informal character of his remarks. Sentence fragments that might not be appropriate in academic prose have been kept; some long and rambling sentences have been divided; some repeated clauses or words have been deleted. A clause that breaks the syntax or train of thought may have been moved elsewhere in the sentence or paragraph. In rare cases sentences within a paragraph may have been reordered. Where no audiofiles survived, attempts have been made to correct likely mistranscriptions. Brackets within the text record insertions. Ellipses in transcripts without audiofiles have been preserved. Whether they indicate deletion of something Strauss said or the trailing off of his voice or serve as a dash cannot be determined. Ellipses that have been added to transcripts with audiofiles indicate that the words are inaudible. Administrative details regarding paper or seminar topics or meeting rooms or times have been deleted without being noted, but reading assignments have been retained. Citations are provided to all passages so readers can read the transcripts with the texts in hand, and footnotes have been provided to identify persons, texts, and events to which Strauss refers.

Readers should make allowance for the oral character of the transcripts. There are careless phrases, slips of the tongue, repetitions, and possible mistranscriptions. However enlightening the transcripts are, they cannot be regarded as the equivalent of works that Strauss himself wrote for publication.

Nathan Tarcov
Editor-in-Chief

Gayle McKeen
Managing Editor

August 2014

Editorial Headnote
Plato's *Republic*, spring 1957

There are no surviving audiotapes of the sessions of this course. This transcript is based upon the original transcript, made by persons unknown to us.

The course was taught in seminar form, with classes after the first session beginning with the reading of a student paper, followed by Strauss's comments on it, and then reading aloud of portions of the text followed by Strauss's comments and responses to student questions and comments. The reading of the student papers in Strauss's courses was not preserved in audio files or in original transcripts; nonetheless, the transcript records Strauss's comments on the papers.

When the text was read aloud in class, the transcript records the words as they appear in the edition of the text assigned for the course, and original spelling has been retained. Citations are included for all passages.

The edition assigned for the course is *Republic* (2 vols.) (trans. Paul Shorey) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930). This is the edition referred to throughout the course; at times Strauss translates the Greek himself.

This transcript was edited by Peter Ahrens Dorf.

For general information about the history of the transcription project and the editing guidelines, see the general headnote to the transcripts above.

Plato's *Republic*

Session 1: March 26, 1957

Leo Strauss: — [in progress] [The Greek title of Plato's *Republic* is *politeia*.] This word is ordinarily translated as constitution. This means not only structure as we may understand it but also a whole way of life. I would translate *politeia* literally, however, as regime. This is somewhat broader and can be used to refer to the whole political and social order. You can say polity if you desire, but this is simply the Anglicized version of *politeia*. When you speak of democracy as a way of life and not as a mere procedure for having a government, then democracy would be a regime in this sense. These words will come up as we read and discuss the *Republic*.

Thus the subject indicated by the title of the book is regime—the all-comprehensive political and social order. The subject of the dialogue, however, as stated almost at the very beginning, is justice. These things, justice and *politeia*, are obviously not the same. Yet those of you who are familiar with the book will know the connection made between the two in the *Republic*. For that matter, you can almost guess what this is. What is the relation in the *Republic* between the polity and justice?

Student: I suppose you would say there is a double relation: (a) in order to understand justice you have to raise the problems of politics, and (b) justice is realized finally only in a particular political order.

LS: This is already much too sophisticated for my present purposes. I would say the two things meet in the notion of the just *polis*. The just *polis* means, however, the best *polis*. The *Republic* is thus concerned with the best *polis* or the best regime. This is, of course, almost universally known, and the theme of the book is sometimes spoken of as “the ideal society” or as a study in utopian thought. These are two ways of expressing what in Plato's language would have been the problem of the best regime. The term utopia is a bit closer to what Plato means than “the ideal society,” because the term utopia was coined by Sir Thomas More, a very profound student of Plato's thought. Utopia means something which does not exist anywhere. The best regime as Plato thought of it is a utopia in that sense, that it does not necessarily have a place. It does not necessarily exist anywhere. On the other hand, it is not a utopia if we use the word in the newer sense—that such a place is simply a figment of the imagination. For Plato the best regime is that demanded by the nature of man. There is no attempt to ignore the importance of this fact. The best regime is thus that demanded by the nature of man and yet that which is not necessarily actual.

Of course one must certainly raise the question: What does this have to do with our concern as political scientists or political analysts for societies which *exist*? Let me very briefly indicate that. All political action is concerned with improvement or preservation. To improve means to make better; to preserve means to retain that which is proving satisfactory. All political action is thus concerned with questions of better or worse. It is impossible to speak of better or worse

without having some notion of good or bad. You cannot speak of bluer without having some notion of what blue is, to use a very simple example. All political action and all political thought [are] thus concerned with good and bad. The problem is that what we ordinarily think about good and bad is certainly not very clear. In any case, we may even be wrong about what we think. With this in mind we call this thing *opinion* about good and bad. With the realization that we do not really know about good and bad, however, comes the demand that we should seek for *knowledge* of good and bad. The completed knowledge, the fully developed knowledge of the good and thus of the bad is the best regime. Knowing the best regime, we would know what is good politically or humanly in an all-comprehensive way regarding the most important and most comprehensive matters. So the question Plato raises in the *Republic* is in no way strange, and it can be made intelligible to every child of the age of twelve or fourteen. Moreover, it can easily be made clear that this is a necessary question. The difficulty arises in this manner.

Granting that it is a necessary question, can it be answered? The dominant view within the social sciences today is that it cannot be answered. This naturally creates a block as far as we are concerned—not as human beings, but rather as social scientists. The reasons underlying the view that Plato's question cannot be answered can be reduced to two heads. The first school, which we may call Positivism, says that all questions of values are not susceptible to rational argument—the question of the best regime is obviously a question of values and thus cannot be answered. Positivism, in other words, rests on a distinction between value and fact, and only questions of fact are considered susceptible of a rational or scientific answer. Questions of value are beyond this province. To give an example, if you say a man is six feet high, your statement is simply a question of fact. If, on the other hand, you say he is intelligent looking, then you are making what would be known as a value judgment. Such a judgment would not be a scientific judgment.

The other school, which is much more interesting and much more intelligent, asserts that this question of Plato cannot be answered because all answers to questions of good and bad, ultimately even of true and false, depend on specific historical premises. These premises impose themselves as evident not to man as man, but to a specific kind of man, e.g., Western man, Greeks, Americans, or what have you. This is not the time and place to develop this, but I would like to make clear that not only scientific social scientists but even people of a much broader view deny the possibility of answering Plato's question. We must not underestimate the power of this collective evil of our time. While we may have the opportunity to go more deeply into this line of thought as the course moves forward, this is not the time at present. What I would like you to keep in mind is this. I remind you of the fact that Plato's basic premise—that the question of the best regime, which is an obviously reasonable question, can be answered—is today contested by very powerful schools.

Let me add one further point. How do these two schools affect the study of Plato? How do the positivists and historicists generally classify Plato? You must remember that these two things fade into each other. Now what is the general positivistic view of Plato's *Republic*? If I am not mistaken, they would say Plato stands condemned as a fascist. That they must say first. There are a number of books on this subject. How a positivist who does not want to make value judgments can do this sort of thing is another matter. There is a certain myth that positivism is akin to liberal democracy. Plato, being a metaphysician, must of necessity be an opponent of liberal democracy. I mention this only as a side point. The more important view, also shared by many

positivists, is that Plato's thought of the best regime is hopelessly dated or antiquated. It is a Greek scheme and can be of no great interest to people who are not Greeks. I only indicate this problem to you at this stage. We must not take for granted Plato's answer; we must approach it distrustfully if we want to understand it. This is what Plato himself would want us to do. To come back to non-controversial ground, I believe you could say one thing. It is generally admitted that students of political theory must study such books as Plato's *Republic*. There are people who deny this, but they are plainly in the minority. They would say that all serious thought begins with, say, Bertrand Russell,ⁱ and that what went before is of not a bit of importance. I think, however, that one might show them if he chose to that they are really mistaken from their own point of view. They admit, for example, the necessity of history of science. Now the history of science from a certain point on is identical with the history of philosophy in general, and thus with the history of political philosophy in particular. This is to say nothing of the fact that Plato played a crucial role in the history of mathematical physics as Whiteheadⁱⁱ constantly emphasizes. Thus one could show them on their own humble ground that they are foolish if they say it is not important to understand Plato. We may take this as a reasonable prejudice, but it is good to clarify it.

Now a more interesting question arises. How should one read Plato? I hope we can show by the way we study Plato here what the proper way is. I will give only a very provisional answer at this time. We must never forget in reading a Platonic work, and especially the *Republic*, that these are dialogues and not treatises. This is an undeniable fact. What it means in terms of our reading and in terms of Plato's purpose we may see later. Now what is a dialogue? Quite externally and superficially, what is it? You won't see this so clearly in the case of the *Republic* for certain reasons, but perhaps you have other Platonic dialogues before you at the present time, for example, the one we read last quarter, *Gorgias*. What does a Platonic dialogue look like? What do you find after the title?

Student: A list of characters.

LS: In what other books do you find this?

Student: Plays.

LS: We can say to begin with that a dialogue is a play, a drama of some sort. This is the external appearance. Of course it is a drama in prose, not in verse, and there are certain other interesting differences. A dialogue is something in between a treatise and a play proper. This has great consequences. I would like to substantiate this a bit to begin with by making a factual remark about the *Republic* in particular. If you would look up in an index you would find among the names of playwrights that the name Aristophanes occurs. Aristophanes was the most famous comic poet of antiquity. If you would look up the references you would see that there are quite a few passages which are literally identical in the *Republic* and in a certain comedy of

ⁱ Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) was a British professor of philosophy. He co-authored *Principia Mathematica* with Alfred Lord Whitehead.

ⁱⁱ Alfred Lord Whitehead (1861-1947) is described by Strauss in *What is Political Philosophy? and other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959, 1988, 17) as one of "the four greatest philosophers of the last forty years" along with Bergson, Husserl, and Heidegger.

Aristophanes. The name of that comedy is *The Assembly of Women*.ⁱⁱⁱ

One can begin the *Republic* in many different ways, but one way as good as any other is to look at Aristophanes's comedy before we turn to Plato's *Republic*. This play was finished around 393, six years after the death of Socrates, and there is the highest probability that Plato's *Republic* was written afterwards. Thus Plato had Aristophanes's comedy in front of him when he composed the *Republic*. This is of some importance for the following reasons. There are quite a few elements of the *Republic* which strike the imagination, especially at the first reading, and seem to be extremely original, but which are not original at all. This could be shown in a number of ways, but certainly by reference to Aristophanes's comedy. I will, therefore, give a brief discussion and analysis of Aristophanes's comedy as a preparation for the *Republic*.

The plot is this. The affairs of Athens are in a bad shape. The Athenian women, dressed as men, make a conspiracy with a view to the establishment of the rule of women. They meet at daybreak on the day the sovereign assembly, the popular assembly, meets. Before going to the place where the popular assembly meets, they have a rehearsal.^{iv} The leader of the women makes a speech to this effect. Women have shown their capacity to rule and to administer much better than men have done, namely, in the households. Above all they have better characters or manners than men. They do all things as they always did them: according to ancient custom. All the misery of Athens is due to constant change. Besides being mothers, they will save the lives of their soldier sons. Finally, they cannot be cheated because they [themselves] are so good at cheating.² After that, the women march to the assembly place.^v The assembly begins. While the assembly takes place, the husband of the leader of the women awakes and is in great need, I'm sorry to say, to ease himself.^{vi} You see, Aristophanes uses much less polite language. Since his wife has put on his things in order to go to the assembly in man's dress, he has to put on his wife's clothes. He has a great deal of difficulty in doing this, and it turns out to be a rather protracted affair. This occupation of the husband coincides exactly with the political action of his wife in the assembly.

After the husband is finished with this business, a fellow citizen approaches him.^{vii} He had tried to enter the assembly, but had found that he was too late and that the whole assembly was filled. The assembly looked to him like an assembly of pale-faced shoemakers. Shoemakers seem to have been famous in Athens, as tailors were in certain parts of Europe, as particularly pale-faced—you know, the result of sitting at home and not doing a man's work. He reports what has happened in the assembly. First, a speaker had made the most popular or democratic proposal,

ⁱⁱⁱ In the *City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964, 1978, 61) Strauss remarks: "We may therefore say that the Socratic conversation and hence the Platonic dialogue is slightly more akin to comedy than to tragedy. This kinship is noticeable also in Plato's *Republic* which is manifestly akin to Aristophanes' *Assembly of Women*." He then has the following footnote (18): "Cf. *Assembly of Women* 558-567, 590-591, 594-598, 606, 611-614, 635-643, 655-661, 673-674, and 1029 with *Republic* 442d10-443a7, 416d3-5, 417a6-7, 464b8-c3, 372b-c, 420a4-5, 457c10-d3, 461c8-d2, 465b1-4, 464d7-e7, 416d6-7, 493d6. Cf. *Republic* 451c2 with *Thesmophoriazusae* 151, 452b6-c2 with *Lysistrata* 676-678, and 473d5 with *Lysistrata* 772. Consider also 420e1-421b3."

^{iv} Aristophanes *Assembly of Women* 1-284.

^v *Assembly of Women* 285-310.

^{vi} *Assembly of Women* 311-371.

^{vii} *Assembly of Women* 372-477.

namely, that merchants should give their merchandise to anyone for the asking. Then a pale-faced youth (and this was the wife of our friend) proposed that the assembly should hand over the city to the women. This proposal was greeted with enthusiasm by the urban majority, and hissed at by the rural minority. The downstaters evidently didn't like this kind of thing. The youth defended his proposal by stressing the moral and democratic superiority of women, and the proposal was adopted with a view to the fact that this was the only scheme that had never yet been tried in Athens.

The women go home.^{viii} The young lady finds her husband together with another visitor.^{ix} She lies cleverly in answer to her husband's question where she had spent the night. She pretends that her friend, a woman in confinement who needed her, had invited her, and pretends to hear for the first time what has happened in the assembly. But thereafter she expounds the great benefits which will accrue to the city from the new order: the rule of women. She admits that the scheme will appeal only to those who are eager for novelty, and those who are not in love with the traditional. The Athenians, however, can be depended upon to meet this condition. The principle of the new order is this: all shall participate in everything and all shall live out of the same (meaning there will be no private property anymore). There will be no rich and no poor; all will have the same way of life. There will be community of the lands, of silver, and of all other property. Out of this common property the women will feed the men. Money will be useless since everyone gets everything he could possibly wish for without money. Now this communism would not work if it were not extended to become a community of women and children. The question is raised, how can a boy make a gift to his girl if there isn't any money? This will of course lead to conflict. There will be violent competition for the fairest women. This will be taken care of by a new provision of the new order. No one may enjoy a fair woman before he has enjoyed an ugly and old one. This will be hard on the less healthy or strong men. To this objection of her husband she doesn't give a sufficient answer. It is clear that the scheme takes care of the women, but not of the less attractive males. She says that the same privilege which is to be granted to the unattractive women will also be granted to the unattractive men. They will also have the first choice. Yet, given this promiscuity, how can a man recognize his own children? This is exactly the same question that is raised in the *Republic*. The answer: all older men will be regarded as fathers of the younger generation. As for work, this will be done by slaves exclusively. Moreover, there will be no lawsuits and so on. All of these are also themes of the *Republic*.

Now there follow three scenes in the last half of the play, all designed to show the incipient operation of the new scheme. The first regards property, the second regards sex, and the third regards the heroine. In the first scene^x a citizen is about to turn in all his property in accordance with the new law. Another citizen tries to dissuade him from doing this. He says only fools obey the law when it hurts; a sensible man waits to see what the others will do. After all it is not customary to give to the *polis*, but rather to take from it. You know, in Athens you got paid for attending your office as a juror or as an assemblyman. In taking rather than giving one imitates the gods. They have the same habit. Some frightening event—an earthquake, lightning, a cat crossing the street—may very well be regarded by the citizens as a good reason for not obeying

^{viii} *Assembly of Women* 478-516.

^{ix} *Assembly of Women* 517-727.

^x *Assembly of Women* 728-876.

the new law. At any rate, the mean fellow in question who refuses to hand in his property is perfectly willing to participate in the public dinners which are now supplied by the city of Athens. While participating in these public dinners he wants to figure out how he can keep his property for himself while still retaining the pleasures of this communism.

The second scene, which is much longer, is as follows.^{xi} A hag and a young girl are on the lookout for lovers. The lover of the young girl is snatched away by the hag, who according to law has the prior rights. The revulsion of the youth is of no help to him. Somehow he gets rid of the hag, but only in order now to be claimed by two hags, still older and uglier. The oldest and ugliest gets him according to the law. The youth is quite unhappy.

The last scene features the perfectly happy heroine.^{xii} It appears that she has a much freer access to wine than before. She fetches the husband and children to the public dinner. It seems that she and her family are better off than anyone else. The scheme of radical innovation has succeeded, or so it seems, but there are two obvious difficulties. First, in the rehearsal speech women had been presented as guardians of the old and the traditional. On this old-fashioned character the women had based their claim to rule. But the rule itself in all its aspects is a most radical innovation. How can this be understood? This is really a political play. In the first place, they have to consider the phenomenon called campaign oratory. She had to sell these novel ideas in a way in which they would be tolerably attractive. The heroine herself is presented as a very good liar anyway. Secondly, and this is more important, this extreme change which is now made is meant to be a change which will end all change. The second difficulty is this. The scheme praises the universal happiness achieved by this rule of women plus communism, but it does not achieve universal happiness. We think only of this young man who is quite unhappy. Who is unhappy in this new scheme? Obviously, the youth and the girl. This means, if I may use this word, [that] the sexually privileged are unhappy. We can infer that the same will be true of the financially privileged. They have good dinners anyway, and while they get good dinners in the future, this is only at the cost of all their property. The scheme makes the underprivileged happy while making the privileged unhappy. It makes the underdogs happy, and in this respect it is a democratic scheme. But there are difficulties. The sexually privileged, the young, are the stronger. Will they abide by this scheme in the future? Will those who have great property not try to cheat the state by flight of capital and other appropriate methods? There is no universal happiness. There is only a different distribution of happiness and unhappiness.

The revolution is, however, not a spontaneous revolt of the underdogs. It doesn't seem that the hags had any considerable part in the revolution, so let us look at the leader of the revolution, our heroine. What prompted her to initiate the change? She seems to be fairly young. She appears to the onlooker like a pale-faced youth, so she can't be very old. She is married to an aged husband. That means she has already complied with the law that [a] young woman must first enjoy an old man before³ [she] can enjoy a young man. She will be better off. She can now do legally what hitherto would be possible only in the form of adultery. The revolutionary has succeeded in giving her private problem the air of a public problem and thus solving her private problem. Perhaps she is ugly. I believe she is, and there is no suggestion that she is beautiful. Thus she will also have the advantages which the ugly are to have in the new scheme. She has a selfish interest

^{xi} *Assembly of Women* 877-1111.

^{xii} *Assembly of Women* 1112-1183.

in establishing the prior right of the ugly women.

Aristophanes offers an excellent political analysis. In spite of all the fun and banter, you must not overlook that. This is the political analysis of a revolution which raises the significant question: Who profits from this? Aristophanes expresses the wish that the play will please two kinds of men: the wise, who will appreciate the play's wise invention, and those who like to laugh.^{xiii} Apparently these are two different groups. There is then something in the play which is not simply a laughing matter. What is that? What would you suggest on the basis of my summary? What does he ridicule?

Student: Possibly the idea of the impossibility of giving everyone equality in happiness.

LS: But the question is whether there was any movement afoot of any political significance to establish universal happiness. What actual folly noticeable in the city of Athens might have precipitated this?

Student: Democracy.

LS: Certainly. The play is a criticism of democracy, especially of two aspects of it: First, of its love of change; and second, of its philanthropy, in the literal sense, "love of man." May I mention that Aristotle in his criticism of Plato's *Republic* in the *Politics* says that the scheme seems to be philanthropic?^{xiv} I believe no modern reader of the *Republic* would have the impression that the *Republic* is philanthropic. But it was meant to be philanthropic, and Aristotle admitted that it had at least the appearance of being philanthropic. Now let us look at these two things, love of change and philanthropy. Democracy loves change, and at the same time it suffers from change because change means also instability. We are given here the spectacle of a most radical change, going far beyond anything ever before contemplated, designed to end all change. That is the absolutely "logical" conclusion, because the alternative, no further change whatever, is of course impossible given the unsatisfactory state of things. Therefore, you can only say that it will make one big change and then no change whatever.

Democracy is also philanthropic. It is nice and kind to men. This means that we must not leave it at merely political equality; we must try to establish complete equality, i.e., communism, as the culmination of democracy. This point, with which we are all so familiar at the present time, was at least familiar to Aristophanes. The scheme of the play, however, is not full equality of men and women, but rather the rule of the women alone. You disregard the continuation of slavery of course, because there were no machines to take care of this sort of thing. Why that? Would it not have been more sensible to say woman suffrage, to have adult suffrage instead of suffrage limited to the men? Why the rule of woman? This is really an eminently political play, and all these things are thought through. Why rule of women? It won't suffice to say that Aristophanes was simply a clown and wished nothing more than to make a joke here. It is more than a laughing matter.

Student: Perhaps he suggests this is the way people are. When they are deprived of something,

^{xiii} *Assembly of Women* 1155-1156.

^{xiv} Aristotle *Politics* 1263b15-16.

instead of securing compensation for this, they want a complete reversal of things.

LS: Something of this kind is correct, but I think we must state it somewhat more precisely. There is never a rule of all. There is always the rule of a part, and this part claims to rule in the interest of all. Moreover, it claims that it is fitted to rule. Democracy itself is not the rule of the whole according to the anti-democratic theorists, but is the rule of the demos, of the common people, of the poor as distinguished from the “better” people. If you have majority rule, and if there is a stable majority as well as a stable minority, then for all practical purposes the stable minority is disfranchised. If you have a society in which *the* cleavage is between the rich and the poor—and Aristotle was aware of the fact that somehow it always happens that there are more poor than rich—then the poor will always be in the majority. The poor will get what they want. This evil can be avoided only if there is more than one cleavage within the community. Read the *Federalist Papers* on this point.^{xv} They balance each other out.

In other words, then, there is nothing new in this rule on the part of women. Democracy is also rule by a part. Democracy has led Athens into a bad situation. The rule of all males has now been discredited; thus it is perfectly legitimate that the women take over. The women have heretofore been excluded from the rule. They are the underdogs, much more so than the common people. The latter have plenty of power. Democracy leads to the rule of women, although not in the sense that some people claim that the United States is controlled at the present time by wealthy women, but in the literal sense. Women as women are much more underdogs than the common people are. They never had the vote. This change from democracy to the rule of the women only confirms the basic error of democracy. Universal rule as the means to universal happiness, that is the desire of democracy. A characteristic is pity for the underdog. If that pity becomes political it leads to pitilessness toward those who are not underdogs. It merely creates a new kind of underdog. In the scheme of the play the hags were the underdogs before; now the young girls are the underdogs. In this rule of the women, he also holds up a mirror in which democracy can see itself. Democracy is generally praised in Athens, and the rule of women is thought of as crazy and absurd. What Aristophanes suggests is that this democracy is almost as crazy as the rule of women; this is just one step further. Now this play is not a political speech or treatise. It was a comedy, and it was to supply laughing matter. The two things which Aristophanes hopes to achieve, that people get some understanding and that they get a laugh, are united in the presentation of a scheme which is absurd. To call it absurd is very kind; it is ridiculous. Why is the rule of women absurd or ridiculous? What is the standard which we have in mind when the rule of women appears to be ridiculous? Why is this very idea of women ruling ridiculous immediately?

Student: They would be unable to defend the city. They are not warriors.

LS: That is good, but I do not think that this comes up at 4 first. Think of crude people laughing. Take children. What do they laugh about? Or take a silly woman wearing last year's hat, or even a hat of twenty years ago. We all feel this is ridiculous. What is our standard here? Let us return to the children. When children see a person who is crippled or deformed in some manner, unless they are very good, their first reaction is to ridicule that fellow.

^{xv} *Federalist* no. 10.

Student: It's the normal, the customary.

LS: It's the custom. What you find primarily ridiculous is a variation from what we feel is the customary. There is one crucial qualification. If the unaccustomed is frightening, then we do not laugh about it. The non-customary is the primary standard. Who has ever heard of women ruling? The mere novelty of the thing is a sign of its absurdity. If we develop this thought, however, the thought that we ridicule with a view to the customary, to the "normal," we arrive at the following conclusion. Our overall standards, which we apply when ridiculing something, have their source in the rule of custom and of the customary. That meant politically in Athens what they called the ancestral polity: the good old times, when all people were honest and nice. This existed prior to the emergence of democracy proper. It is known to everyone who has read Aristophanes that he was a conservative, detesting innovation, and soon it was known that the slogan which brought these conservative men together was the ancestral polity, as distinguished from the recent democracy. The first standard of the ridiculous is the customary, but we have to go beyond that.

The attempt to introduce complete equality leads to the consequence that those who are superior, here the young and beautiful, are punished. Egalitarianism punishes the superior. What kind of superiority is that?

Student: Natural.

LS: Democracy is thus an attempt to equalize—by law, by institutions, by convention—what is unequal by nature. Now we arrive at this conclusion. What is happening here in the play is a revolt against nature. This revolt is ineffectual in spite of the pretense that it works, because these boys and girls won't stand that nonsense forever. The revolt against nature, the ineffectual revolt against nature, is the most ridiculous thing. It is not merely custom; custom can be changed. Look at fashions: the old-fashioned people become ridiculous. Here the ineffective character of the revolt against nature is the most ridiculous thing. So the standard of ridiculousness ultimately is nature. The revolt claims to be a revolt in the name of nature, but it is in fact a revolt of human artifice and law against nature. The play begins with a praise of the lamp which the heroine has in her hand.^{xvi} She ascribes all virtues normally ascribed to the sun to the lamp instead. The sun, the natural source of life, is replaced by an artificial source of life. Her name may also have something to do with that because it means a mixture of action and speaking or thinking.^{xvii} The main point of interest here is, to repeat, the attempt to establish an order against nature. This is ridiculous in itself. In Aristophanes's opinion, moreover, democracy has something in common with that. But this greatest laughing matter—the attempt to revolt against nature by human nature—does not account for the funny, comical character of the play. What is so comical, so funny? Of course those of you who have not read it will not know it, but certainly you must have gotten some impression of what is going on from our discussion up to this point.

Let us now look at what is so obviously funny and comical in the play. In the first place, we notice the use of tragic verses in wholly untragic, nonheroic circumstances. Think of a student

^{xvi} Aristophanes *Assembly of Women* 1-18.

^{xvii} The heroine's name, Praxagora, comes from the Greek words *praxis* (action) and *agora* (the assembly, speaking to the assembly).

who doesn't know whether he passed or flunked his examination quoting, "To be or not to be." What does it mean if you use tragic words in wholly non-tragic circumstances? This is very comical, of course. I think you can demonstrate this by quoting the most tragic phrases from Shakespeare in quite different circumstances in ordinary life. What is this? We must understand this comedy. Well, it is a kind of debunking or degrading. Think of the remark of Cervantes, when he says that his hero took some clean shirts along on his first expedition.^{xviii} But in the old books about knights and chivalry there was nothing said about clean shirts and such things. There was nothing said about such prosaic things as clean shirts. Debunking. The standard for the ridiculous here is everyday life. The higher is measured by the lower; the higher is degraded. There is something mean or base about that. The second point, and the one which is more obvious, pertains to the incredible obscenities which occur in the [play]. There is no obscenity which the most corrupt of you could think of which does not occur there.

The obscenities mean the indecent things or, in Greek, the base things. But now very strange things happen. These obscenities of the two kinds, rather these base things of the two kinds, the obscenities and the comical use of tragic word, are pleasant. You can't help laughing about them. So the comedy, at least that of Aristophanes, shows that the noble is something different from the pleasant, and this we all know, and also preserves that pleasure as the more desirable thing. The comedy acts on the premise that the good is the pleasant. The comedy is the revolt of the pleasant against the noble. Now we have seen before that the main theme of the play is the opposition of nature and art or convention. The revolt against nature by art is ridiculous. On the other hand, here we see the comedians taking the side of the pleasant against the noble. I will put it as follows. The pleasant is that which is good by nature. The noble, being conventional, forbids what is by nature good. The conventional is against nature. This point with which we are familiar is an important point in Aristophanes's argument.

We may connect this with the theme of the play as follows. By nature, the most pleasant things should go to those who are by nature superior: in this case to the young and the beautiful. By convention the most pleasant things do not go to those who are by nature superior. Hence there is a definite opposition between nature and convention. The pursuit of the pleasant things, however, leads to conflict and thus to the opposite of pleasure, to pain. Even among these people who are superior by nature, the young and beautiful, there will be competition. So there is a need for law, law which forbids some pleasant things. It is nature which calls for law, and law or convention is thus not simply against nature. There is, however, a tension between nature and conventions. For example, the natural inequality of man does not agree with the social, or legal, or conventional inequality. An old nobleman may marry a young, beautiful peasant girl with all kinds of bad consequences. To state it more generally, the ancestral, customary, traditional polity, which is to begin with the standard for judging democracy, cannot be simply good, but the solution which it offers is preferable to the scheme offered by the young woman. In her scheme, all young and beautiful girls would be in the position of that single peasant girl who married the decrepit nobleman. The ancestral polity, in other words, has a broad agreement with the natural demands of women. There is a tension between nature and convention even there, but it can be solved only in a non-political way, in a private way, one could almost say in a secret way. This is the source of a number of great improprieties in the play which I cannot discuss. I must leave these

^{xviii} Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 1, chapters 3, 7. Don Quixote takes clean shirts with him on his *second* expedition.

to your imagination.

There is, however, another way. There is a tension between nature and convention, although there is no fundamental opposition between them. How can this tension be resolved? Answer: the comedy. There are a few verses if you would like to look them up, 579 following, in which Aristophanes says: "The spectators hate to see often the old thing[s]." ^{xix} Therefore this story of the change will be pleasing to the spectators. The innovations offered here are pleasant, thus good. The desire for forbidden pleasures is vicariously fulfilled in the comedy. Thus the ancestral polity, the best possible political order according to Aristophanes has a problem, a fundamental problem, because it is not simply adequate. The ancestral polity, to become adequate, must be modified by the existence of comedy. This means obviously that Aristophanes does not believe in the possibility of a simple return to the olden times. This new demand implied in all these new-fangled, subversive tendencies of many Athenians in the meantime calls for the comedy as the supplement to the ancestral polity. The comedy parodies tragedy; tragedy does not parody comedy. The opposite is obviously not true. Comedy builds on tragedy and presupposes it. ^{xx} — [Comedy, by] ⁶ building on tragedy, and presupposing it, represents a higher state of reflection than ⁷ tragedy does. This is Aristophanes's view, by the way, as you could see from his *Peace*, where the symbol of comedy, a very dirty insect living from the excrement of animals and so on, is said to have a higher flight, to be capable of a higher flight than even the eagle. ^{xxi} The lowness of comedy conceals its rank, its highness. To state it simply, the comedy is strictly speaking ironic. The concealment of the higher is clearly irony.

Enough about Aristophanes's comedy, although an infinity of things might be shown here. It is enough that we note this one point: communism, community of women and children, community of property, and so on, is already there. How can we understand from this Plato's *Republic* as an overall reply to Aristophanes? We can visualize Plato saying this: Would you Aristophanes, on the surface at least, agree that what you find so terribly funny—communism, in all respects—is not funny at all? One must not be so crude as to speak of rule of women, but if you replace that by equality of men and women, as Plato does, it is immediately more sensible. What, then, is the deeper error of Aristophanes? Plato answers that in the *Republic*. This scheme of absolute communism, he says, would work, given certain conditions. What these are we will come to later, but some of you may remember it—in short, if the philosophers were to rule. What Aristophanes has forgotten in his cleverness is philosophy. From this point of view the *Republic* can be understood really as a reply to Aristophanes. That this is the answer of Plato can be shown from an explicit criticism of Aristophanes which Plato gives at the *Banquet*. ^{xxii} At the *Banquet* Aristophanes himself is the speaker, and he gives his doctrine of love. ^{xxiii} The thesis of his speech at the banquet can be stated as follows. Here is a being, man or beast, and here is another being of the same species. They tend toward each other. This is on the same level. What is the Socratic teaching regarding eros or love? Aristophanes forgets this most important thing, philosophy. I would suggest that you note the references to Aristophanes in the translation, especially in the footnotes, and look them up in the context. One must always remember,

^{xix} Aristophanes *Assembly of Women* 579-580.

^{xx} There is a break in the tape at this point.

^{xxi} Aristophanes *Peace* 1-139.

^{xxii} Plato *Symposium*.

^{xxiii} Plato *Symposium* 189c2-193e2.

however, that the translator generally finds only the most obvious references; the references which any child reading the books for the first time with any amount of care would also find.^{xxiv} The more subtle things in either Plato or Aristophanes will not be found in these notes.

This much for a general introduction. Do you have any questions or difficulties?

Student: I don't understand Aristophanes's rejection or forgetting of philosophy, because certainly in some of his comedies he teaches philosophy. I wonder whether he consciously rejects it or forgets it here. Comedy as a solution to political problems may have been an alternative to philosophy.

LS: That is a good point. By this remark you prepare the class for the discussion of poetry in the *Republic* because poetry is, in the *Republic* at least, the competitor with philosophy. I mean it is not rhetoric, not politics, as it is in other dialogues. This is true, but could one not say that the fact that Aristophanes was aware of philosophy and rejected philosophy does not prove that he understood philosophy. I would go beyond this.

Student: I have a somewhat different picture of Aristophanes's speech at the *Banquet*. The lovers, who are on a horizontal plane, are punished in his picture because they aspire to go upward. They want to become like gods.

LS: But this is not the Socratic solution. May I come back to the first question for one moment? In the *Banquet* Aristophanes changes places with another man because of the hiccups.^{xxv} This other man is a physicist, a pre-Socratic philosopher. If people change places this means that they are in a way exchangeable. This the Platonic dialogues use generally as a common device. Aristophanes and this physicist stand for more or less the same thing. Aristophanes was so far from being simply averse to philosophy that it was a very specific kind of philosophy which was the basis of his play. From Plato's point of view, however, this philosophy is not truly philosophy. To admit the legitimacy of this philosophy is not good enough.

Student: . . .

LS: But by admitting that the ancestral polity needs comedy in addition to this, he transcends the purely political level. But let us leave this for the time being because we are not prepared for that. I think you can see already from this brief discussion how crucial the problem of poetry is. That the political as political is a narrow construction [and] does not suffice is shown by the tension between any actual polity and what would be a truly and fully natural life. There must be some other means for that. Comedy, through the mouth of Aristophanes, claims to be that. To state it more generally, poetry claims to be that supra-political force which can bring about human life on the higher levels where the political life proper fails. I think many people today would also say this. Do they not get their greatest comfort from poetry, including novels of course? I think this is very common today. Plato takes that up in the *Republic* as a major theme,

^{xxiv} Strauss refers here to Paul Shorey, the translator of the *Republic*, whom Strauss refers to and criticizes throughout this entire course. Plato, *Republic*, 2 vols., trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930, 1946).

^{xxv} *Symposium* 185c4-e5, 188e2-189c1. The other man is Eryximachus.

first in book 2 and 3 and then in book 10. It is so important that it is repeated. Plato speaks of an eternal fight going on throughout the ages between philosophy and poetry.^{xxvi} I suggest we take this up in more detail when we hear Plato's arguments in favor of philosophy as against poetry.

For the present time the fact that the Greek poets, especially a man like Aristophanes, were not non-philosophic can be disregarded. The first impression of Homer, Sophocles, Aristophanes, or some of the others is that this is something quite different from philosophy. This becomes especially clear if you compare [them] with Aristotle. But even in the case of Plato it becomes very clear that it is very unpoetic to do such things. But I suggest now that we have a look at the very beginning of the *Republic*.

This beginning, the cast of characters, is very improper because this is not a dialogue performed like a drama, but a dialogue that is narrated. There should be only one name here at the beginning, that of Socrates. Moreover, the list of the characters is absolutely incomplete. He^{xxvii} gives only some of the names. For example, Cleitophon is omitted. He does not even give the names of all those who speak, to say nothing of a complete list of those who are mentioned by name as present. This list of characters is defective and should be forgotten. So it is a narrated dialogue; Socrates tells the dialogue. While I have forgotten the exact figure I believe that more dialogues are performed than are narrated.^{xxviii} Do you understand the difference between performed and narrated? In a performed dialogue, you find the name of every new speaker: A says this, B says this, and so on. But if it looks like this: "Then he said, to which I replied," and so on, then it is a narrated dialogue. Is it clear? A performed dialogue is one which takes place before our eyes. We are here listening to A, to B, and to C. A narrated dialogue is when someone tells us of a conversation he has had. What is the significant difference between these two kinds of dialogues?

Student: The narrator has to interpret many things, whereas in the other much of this is left to us or to other characters.

LS: In other words, he does what in the other dialogues Plato does. That is not superficial enough, and thus not good enough for our purposes. Look at a scene as you will find in the first book. Regarding Thrasymachus, Socrates says at a certain place: And then I saw what I have never seen before, Thrasymachus get red or blush.^{xxix} This would be absolutely impossible in a performed dialogue unless the speaker would ask: Why do you blush? Let me state it most simply. In a performed dialogue you only *hear*, but in a narrated dialogue you *see* also. The narrator tells you what was not said but seen by him. Furthermore, Socrates says—and this is also a scene in the *Republic*—that he wanted to provoke him a bit and thus asked him this question.^{xxx} This would be impossible in a performed dialogue, because in a performed dialogue if Socrates were to say "Now I want to tease you," it would completely spoil the thing. Crudely we can say that a performed dialogue gives us only speeches; a narrated dialogue gives us in addition visible action—blushing, weeping, and so on. Both actions and thoughts as

^{xxvi} Plato *Republic* 607b3-c3.

^{xxvii} Strauss refers here to the translator Shorey.

^{xxviii} In *The City and Man* (58), Strauss notes that nine Platonic dialogues are narrated, 26 are performed.

^{xxix} Plato *Republic* 350d2-3.

^{xxx} Possibly a reference to *Republic* 329d7-e1.

distinguished from speeches come in in the narrated dialogue. To that extent, the narrated dialogue has a greater breadth. Whether there is also a price for that is another matter.

There is also something else which must be mentioned. In a narrated dialogue—excuse me, in a performed dialogue you are confronted immediately by a number of moving actors on a stage remote from you. You do not know for which audience this is meant. It is an indefinite audience. In a narrated dialogue, it is possible to indicate the audience for which the dialogue is meant. Take the *Protagoras*. This is a dialogue narrated by Socrates. It is a dialogue which takes hours and hours, and at the end Socrates gives the impression that he has to run away because he is very busy. At the beginning of the dialogue, however, you see that Socrates runs away to tell the same dialogue immediately after it had happened.^{xxx} Furthermore, through the conversation with Socrates we see who it is that he is telling this to. What is the audience to which this whole dialogue is finally addressed? Do you understand this? Let me show this to you in the *Republic* and by this it will become completely clear. The *Republic* is followed by two other dialogues: one is called the *Timaeus* and the other is called the *Critias*. At the beginning of the⁹ [*Timaeus*] ^{xxxii} Socrates refers to what he has told them the day before, and what he had told them the day before was the *Republic*. In [the *Republic*, in] a long speech, Socrates tells what has happened “yesterday.”^{xxxiii} We don’t know to whom he talks, but we know that it is to a specific audience. We know that in advance. If we read the beginning of the *Timaeus* we will see what this specific audience is. To repeat, the difference between the narrated dialogue and the performed dialogue is this: in the narrated dialogue both thought and action can be made explicit; in a performed dialogue this cannot be made explicit. A performed dialogue consists only of speeches and it cannot articulate the non-spoken thoughts.

The second difference is that in a narrated dialogue we are referred to an audience to which the dialogue as a whole is directed; moreover, this audience can be identified. In the *Republic* itself it is not identified, but Socrates tells us how we can find out who the audience is. Are these points clear? We must remember that it is not merely a nonsensical thing when Plato chooses to write now a performed dialogue, now a narrated dialogue. There are crucial differences. Ultimately the question is why one is a narrated dialogue and why another is a performed dialogue. You can see many advantages, e.g., Socrates’s description of his reaction to Thrasymachus, to Glaucon, and to the other characters which would not be present if it were a performed dialogue.^{xxxiv}

Student: What is the character of the audience to which we were referred in the *Gorgias*?

LS: Nothing. It is a performed dialogue, and it is as aloof as a drama on a stage to be played anywhere and everywhere. It’s undefined. The narrated dialogue establishes a closer connection between us and the [author]^{xxxv} than does the performed dialogue. [In the narrated dialogue] Socrates tells also us, and¹⁰ [a performed dialogue] is merely what happens on a stage. To return to the undeniable fact, then, the *Republic* is a narrated dialogue told by Socrates¹¹.

^{xxx} *Protagoras* 362a1-4, 309b7-310a7.

^{xxxii} *Timaeus* 17c1-19b2.

^{xxxiii} *Republic* 327a1.

^{xxxiv} *Republic* 336b4-7, 336d5-e2, 362d1-2, 367e6-368a1.

^{xxxv} In original transcript: “order,” with a parenthetical question: (audience?).

Let us see how it begins. It begins in this way, and here I give you a literal translation. “*Down* I went yesterday to the Piraeus with Glaucon the son of Ariston, in order to pray to the goddess; and at the same time desiring to see the festival and how they will do it, since they arrange it now for the first time.” The beginning incidentally is metrical. It begins like a drama, like a tragedy or comedy. The whole dialogue takes place in the Piraeus, and this has a certain meaning. The Piraeus, the harbor of Athens, stands for something. For what? Commerce and navy: the characteristic things of new Athens. The old landed gentry had nothing to do with that. The situation is comparable to the conflict which took place in seventeenth century England. The Piraeus stands for naval and commercial powers and that is, from Plato's point of view, corruption. Furthermore, as you see, they look at a procession, and a new procession. There is innovation even in religion. Innovation has for Plato something which is akin to dissolution. The dialogue opens in this fashion.

The first words, “*Down* I went,” remind us already of the story later on of the cave,^{xxxvi} but this time it is a going down not to the cave but to the Piraeus. Let me tentatively suggest the following proportion: Piraeus to the town equal[s] [the]¹² town to truth. Of course this depends to a great extent on the interpretation of the significance of the cave. Glaucon was a brother of Plato, as we happen to know from other sources, e.g., Xenophon.^{xxxvii} Apparently he went down with Glaucon for no other purpose than to pray to the goddess and to look at a new kind of procession. What was Socrates's reaction? They looked at this thing and he comments as follows: “Now, the procession of the natives seemed to be beautiful, but no less proper than the procession by the Thracians.”^{xxxviii} Socrates is not a man who admires only the Athenian. He is perfectly open-minded: the Athenians did a beautiful job, the Thracians also.

After they had prayed and looked, then they went toward home, toward the town.^{xxxix} Something happens. Someone sees them from afar as they walk toward home. Polemarchus, the son of Cephalus (Polemarchus literally translated means warlord) commanded his servant to run and command Socrates and Glaucon to stay. The boy caught him from the back from his garment and said: “Polemarchus commands you to stay.” Socrates asks him where Polemarchus is, and the boy replies that he is coming up from the rear. “We shall stay,” said Glaucon. There follows a little scene, but then a little later Polemarchus came, and Adeimantus, the brother of Glaucon, and Niceratus, the son of Nicias, as well as some others apparently returning from the procession. Now Polemarchus says, “Socrates you seem to be embarked on your way to town,” “You do not badly opine,” answered Socrates. Polemarchus asks: “Do you see how many we are?” Socrates replies that he could not fail to do so. Polemarchus says “Either you vanquish us or you stay here.” Socrates suggests there may be another possibility: he and Glaucon may persuade them to let them go, “But could you persuade us,” Polemarchus says, “if we don't listen?” “In no way,” said Glaucon. Polemarchus tells them they must act on the assumption that they will not listen. Then Adeimantus comes in. ^{xl}

^{xxxvi} *Republic* 514a1-520d4.

^{xxxvii} An apparent reference to Xenophon *Memorabilia* 3.6.1, though it is only stated there that Socrates was “well disposed” to Glaucon “for the sake of Charmides . . . and for the sake of Plato.” See Strauss, *City and Man*, 65.

^{xxxviii} *Plato Republic* 327a4-5.

^{xxxix} 327b1.

^{xl} 327b2-c14.

Now what is the situation up to now? What you see in this very first scene is an enactment on the theme of the whole book: justice. There is a man who wants to have his way: Polemarchus. He commands and commands. This means force. Persuasion is impossible, because he won't listen. Glaucon gives in immediately. This does not necessarily mean that he is cowardly, but also that he would like to stay in the Piraeus. Socrates evidently wishes to rush home away from this corruption to the pure city, but Glaucon is young, therefore more corruptible, and wants to stay there. Now Adeimantus comes in.

"Don't you know there will be a torch race toward evening from horses in honor of the goddess?" "From horses," Socrates replies. "That is indeed a novelty." Here is another novelty. "They will then, having torches in their hands, hand them over to each other as they race with the horses, or how do you mean?" "Exactly so," said Polemarchus, "and in addition they will make an all-night festival which would be worth watching. We shall get up after the dinner and view that night festival and be together with many of the young people here, and we will have conversation. But stay, and do not be difficult." Glaucon says: "It seems that we must stay." "If it seems," says Socrates, "one must do it that way."^{xli}

Now this is a brief act of justice. Everything was involved. What happened? Polemarchus uses force. In the simple case this is the majority. The majority, other things being equal, have more fists than the minority. What does Adeimantus do? He persuades. Here we have force, here we have persuasion. What happens next? How is the issue decided? Who decides the issue? Glaucon! And what does Socrates say? If it is the opinion of everyone else except myself, then I abide by it. This is a very rudimentary but not completely negligible aspect of justice. He doesn't impose his will, but rather he is ready to go along. It is decided decisively by Glaucon, however, and not by Socrates that they will stay on.

What do they do then? They go home to the house of Polemarchus, and we find there Lysias, and Euthydemus, the brothers of Polemarchus, Thrasymachus the Chalcedonian, Charmantides the Paeonian, and Cleitophon, the son of Aristonymus. The father of Polemarchus, Cephalus, was also inside.^{xlii} These are all the persons. In all the Platonic dialogues only those who are of importance are mentioned, but all those mentioned are of importance even if they don't say a word. How many persons are there? We have first the group Socrates, Glaucon; then Polemarchus, Adeimantus, and Niceratus. You notice there are more there. He says: "Niceratus and some others." These others are not mentioned by name, and we may disregard them. Then we come to the other group mentioned above. There are eleven, counting Socrates. The rule of the ancient tradition is that those with Socrates will number ten. Socrates talks to ten people in the Piraeus. The number ten is of some significance, as you will see if you read Xenophon.^{xliii} In the revolution of 403 there were ten men or magistrates in the Piraeus.^{xliv} This is a reminder of the earlier revolution. We see at the beginning an indication of Athenian disintegration. This creates the desire for restoration. Such a restoration was effected in 403, the period of the Thirty Tyrants, another fact of history that might be looked up. The Lysias mentioned here is a famous

^{xli} 328a1-b3

^{xlii} 328b4-8.

^{xliii} Xenophon *Hellenica* 4.19, 4.38.

^{xliv} See Plato *Seventh Letter* 324c5.

orator, and his speeches have fortunately been preserved. He and his family were major victims of that earlier revolution. Quite a few of them were killed. Niceratus, the son of Nicias, was also a victim.^{xlv} The point is this: We are reminded of the restoration attempt by the old-fashioned forces, but here we are not confronted with potential restorers but with victims of these restorers. This is already an indication of one thing that will become perfectly clear as we go on. The restoration which Socrates begins here is not the oligarchic revolution of 403; it is not a political restoration proper. This will come out clearly as we go along.

We see that Cephalus, the father, is separated very clearly from all the others by very clear punctuation. Socrates, a perfectly well-bred man, turns his attention first to the most dignified and the oldest member of the community. You can see that he says immediately something about Cephalus, not Thrasymachus or some of the others.^{xlvi} Moreover, he talks first to Cephalus, and out of this there arises quite naturally a conversation with Cephalus. After this has come to an end, a somewhat untimely end, the sons of Cephalus speak.^{xlvii} The oldest son, Polemarchus, takes over, and then Thrasymachus is the third to speak. While there is infinitely more in these few pages, I think we can leave it at this for the moment. Is there any point you would like to raise?

Student: I noticed that in all these translations there is in parenthesis the words “On Justice.”

LS: These subtitles are in all manuscripts. From the purely external point of view they are as genuine as anything else. There is some evidence to the fact that these titles stem from the Platonic schools and not from Plato. For example, Burnet's, *the* edition of the original now, doesn't carry them at all.^{xlviii} It is certainly correct to say that the dialogue is on the question of justice. The schoolman who gave it this title was correct. As for the other thing, political, which means there was a division of all dialogues into those political, those ethical, those logical, and what have you, this represents a very crude and in no way helpful division. Of course it makes sense to say the *Republic* is political, but I think we can discount that. Are there any other questions?

Student: With regard to the problem of the audience of the *Republic*, it was once brought up that if you say the audience was the audience in the *Timaeus*, this would already presuppose that the *Republic* had been told once before. Since they don't tell the whole story . . .^{xlix}

LS: But it is said that it was told before. They meet again, and Socrates gives them a summary.

Same Student: But it may have been a summary of a conversation based on this narrative, but not this very narrative itself. There was another audience.

LS: That might have been, but since the only evidence we have tells us differently I would think

^{xlv} Lysias *Against Eratosthenes* 4-23; Xenophon *Hellenica* 3.39.

^{xlvi} Plato *Republic* 328b8-c4.

^{xlvii} 328d7-331d9.

^{xlviii} Plato *Opera* IV, ed. John Burnet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1902, 1954).

^{xlix} Ellipsis in original transcript. It might indicate that the remainder of the student's comment was inaudible.

the other is more probable. I thought you would say we know the *Republic* was written much earlier than the *Timaeus*, and thus that Plato wrote the *Republic* without any thought of the *Timaeus*. No one really knows this, because it is considered that Plato wrote the *Republic* around 380 and the *Timaeus* in 360, and it might have been that Plato thought in 380 that as soon as he got around to it he would write the *Timaeus* as a sequel to the *Republic* and link them up in such a way.

Now we must be very careful. We know that the dialogue is about justice, because we have read it or glanced at it, but the people here, the audience in the dialogue, do not know that this will be a conversation about justice. They meet socially, Socrates addresses them: first, the old gentleman in a perfectly becoming and proper way, and they talk. Out of this discussion arises the topic of justice. Whether Socrates forces the issue or whether it emerges quite naturally, this we must see. Do you see what I mean? You meet an old man. You hadn't come to see him, but he was simply in the house you happened to be visiting with some friends. Out of this there arises a discussion with the old man. This is the normal thing, but why should this casual conversation lead to the question of justice? That you must follow; you must try to see how it emerges and what Cephalus says.

¹ Deleted "is."

² Moved "themselves."

³ Deleted "they."

⁴ Deleted "the."

⁵ Deleted "book."

⁶ Deleted "as."

⁷ Deleted "the."

⁸ Deleted "it."

⁹ Deleted "dialogue"

¹⁰ Deleted "it."

¹¹ "(audience?)" deleted.

¹² Changed from "to."

Session 2: March 28, 1957

Leo Strauss: —[in progress] I was very satisfied with your paper.ⁱ That was particularly good of you to look up about the god Cephalus, and that is certainly very reasonable and useful. Why did you say he was an orator?

Student: I looked this up in two or three places and found the one I thought was the right one; one who had died two or three years before Plato was born.

LS: That would have been in 430 or 432, somewhere around there. I know nothing of that. I know only that he came to Athens at the invitation of Pericles and was an industrialist or arms manufacturer. His son, Lysias, was a famous orator, but I had no knowledge of this other.

In another place you translate the phrase “You speak restoringly.” Which place did you translate like that? I think “correctly” would be a safer and simpler translation,ⁱⁱ but this is a minor point. I did not quite understand what you said about truth in the Cephalus section. Did you try to establish a connection between this dropping of truth in the discussion and the fact that Cephalus told myths and referred to the myth? Did you mean that?

Same Student: No. When Socrates talks about justice, and only justice, then he leaves piety to Cephalus. Then he says: “But do you affirm that justice is only truth-telling?”ⁱⁱⁱ

LS: I think this is clear, but what about truth in particular? If you speak of three things here, truth too is dropped. Truth is no longer discussed. This is for very significant reasons. One of the crucial passages later concerns the noble lie.^{iv} If lying as such is unjust, then there can be no such thing as a noble lie. But apart from this, what is it you said about truth in particular as distinguished from contractual justice in this section? I did not understand this.

Same Student: As I see this, Socrates has three things to divide up among piety and justice, and he keeps one . . .

LS: I think that suggestion is certainly worth consideration: that these three things, piety and these two subdivisions of justice; and these three things, fathers, poets, and moneymakers,^v have to be considered. I will have to think about that a bit.

The last point I want to make is this. When you speak of morally neutral justice, I think you have a point there, but you should have emphasized it as strongly as you could that this was done by Polemarchus at Socrates’s suggestion. Socrates brings in these examples from the morally neutral arts, not Polemarchus. Now let us turn to these passages and see if we can find out some

ⁱ The session began with the reading of a student’s paper, which was not recorded.

ⁱⁱ Apparently a reference to Plato *Republic* 331d1.

ⁱⁱⁱ 331c1-3

^{iv} 414b8-c2.

^v 330c3-6.

more general things from these passages.

I remind you of only one thing pertaining to the scene prior to the conversation with Cephalus. They had been promised a torch race and a dinner.^{vi} What happens to these two things? Has any one of you read the *Republic* as a whole and thus knows what happened to the torch race and the dinner?

Student: They never get them.

LS: The promise is not kept. What does this mean? Let us take the simple example of the dinner. In a way, this is an example of injustice, but how does this affect people? If they don't get a dinner, they must have been hungry. What is happening in this dialogue is really a training in self-control regarding bodily pleasures. This is the most simple action of the dialogue. The Spartan, ascetic character of the teaching is put into practice in the very conversations. They don't get food.

Student: Nor do they get the pleasure of watching the torch races.

LS: That is another thing, but I hadn't planned to raise this here. One might think of the simple pleasures of the eye, and the fact that one can take these in without making any effort. You have to think this is harder than just looking at a torch race. We will come to the case of the dinner later, but I would like to mention that there is at least one pupil of Plato who has understood this very beautifully, and that was Sir Thomas More. In the *Utopia*, the presentation of Thomas More's best regime takes place after luncheon.^{vii} The utopia of Thomas More is much less ascetic than the utopia of Plato. Let us now turn to Cephalus.

He has sacrificed, and later on we go out to look at his sacrifice. Cephalus is the most respectable figure, but for us, who know the whole dialogue, there is another most respectable figure—Socrates. Cephalus is eclipsed by Socrates. This is very shrewd. Now what about Socrates and sacrificing? Socrates is never presented as sacrificing in the Platonic dialogues. Xenophon, if you would have time to read the beginning of the *Memorabilia*, says that Socrates was notorious for his sacrificing in public. Later on, however, he has to admit that the only thing publicly known about Socrates's life in Athens was that he had in one case defended the generals after an unsuccessful battle and insisted on the legal procedures as against the popular emotionalism.^{viii} This would seem to prove that his sacrificing was not of such public notoriety as he had said at the beginning. In one place Plato presents Socrates as praying, sacrificing and praying being the two main parts of piety.^{ix} This is of some importance. Socrates is not presented as sacrificing, but what does he do instead? He talks. This is his piety, and since this talk has the character of questioning, you can say that Socrates's piety consists in questioning, in identifying the being or beings which deserve to be worshipped, to be looked up to, and to be bowed to. The popular gods, to whom Cephalus sacrifices, are thought to be beings which live in ease and which are deathless, to say nothing of the fact that [they] live on nectar and ambrosia. This must have been

^{vi} 328a1-9.

^{vii} Thomas More, *Utopia*, end of book I.

^{viii} Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.1.1-2, 17-18.

^{ix} Plato *Symposium* 220c1-d5.

particularly tasty food and drink. They are thought to be free from the defects of man. They owe their being to man's quest for perfect beings, beings higher than man. Perhaps the fact that there are many of these gods would be in itself a defect, and this might lead to the notion of one god—a being without any defects. This is what man seeks: a being which is perfectly self-sufficient. We have already here the link to the central passage of the *Republic*: the good.^x The question is what Plato understood by the good, but that it is *the* good means the perfect, the absolutely perfect, the absolutely wantless self-sufficiency. The fact that Cephalus sacrifices and that Socrates does not sacrifice is already an indication of this central remark about the idea of the good.

Now it appears that Cephalus is a wealthy man. Although this is not said, he happened to be an industrialist and an immigrant. We know this from a speech by his son Lysias.^{xi} So this element of the new and the strange seen from the perspective of this country gentleman, this immigrant industrialist, is in addition to what I said last time about the indication of dissolution. He is also a father, but not simply the father of Polemarchus and the other son. He is a father in a very emphatic sense, and he makes this very clear here in 328c, that's at the bottom of page 7.^{xii} "For if I were still able to make the journey uptown easily there would be no need of your coming hither, but we would go to visit you." Since *I* can't walk anymore, *we* can't walk anymore. He is a real father, a patriarch. There is in addition a connection between his being a father in this very emphatic sense and his being wealthy. A poor father is only a half father. No one knew this better than John Locke, a great expert in these matters, when he said a father has no natural tie on the obedience of his grown-up children. He may have a tie on them, however, because he can dispose of his property, and he will dispose of his property according to the manner in which his children have comported with his humors. This, Locke says, is a strong tie on the obedience of children, although it is not a natural tie.^{xiii} This is quite obvious today, especially if you compare it with the situation a few generations ago. The preservation of family ties has something to do with the importance of the family property. Cephalus certainly meets these conditions.

Mr. Stevens noted that Cephalus's pleasure from speeches as distinguished from bodily pleasures is somewhat doubtful. Only after the bodily pleasures have withered away is he free to devote himself to speeches. There is a very great beauty in this conversation. You see the comical touches and the comedy of which we spoke last time in the sequel on page 11 of your translation. Someone asks the poet, Sophocles: "Sophocles, are you still able to sleep with a woman?"^{xiv} The prudery of the translator here is unbearable. He translates it, "service to Aphrodite." It is really preposterous to Victorianize Plato. And he replies, "Most gladly I escape[d] this thing you talk of as if I had run away from a most raging and savage beast of a master." This is what Sophocles said. When Cephalus speaks on this same point (the next page) he says: "We are rid of *many masters*." He had much more to suffer from this affliction than Sophocles. I don't have to elaborate the notion or the crude point that the father is also connected with that. Cephalus is,

^x *Republic* 504c9-509b10. See 475e6-480a13.

^{xi} Lysias *Against Eratosthenes* 12.4.

^{xii} Plato, *Republic*, 2 vols., trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930, 1946). This is the translation Strauss refers to, and criticizes, throughout. Strauss at times translates the Greek himself for the class.

^{xiii} John Locke, *Second Treatise*, sections 72-73.

^{xiv} Plato *Republic* 329c1-2.

how shall I put it, a he-man. We will come back to other characteristics of his as we go along. He answers to Socrates's question, "It is not old age but the manner of a man which is the cause of happiness or ease."^{xv} Then it goes over to the question of money, the fact that it is not the question of wealth that makes him so happy in his old age. He makes the very sensible statement that wealth is by no means despicable. Wealth brings many comforts, but a man of bad disposition would not be helped by that.^{xvi} It is the Aristotelian doctrine that virtue needs equipment.^{xvii} Virtue is the core of happiness, and the equipment is a kind of periphery which belongs to the full picture. Its absence, however, does not destroy the worth of a man. So he is a moderate man. Regarding the acquisition of wealth, we see that his grandfather was wealthy, his father was a spendthrift, and he has rebuilt the family fortune. As you may observe, that bespeaks a spendthrift in the next generation. This is brought out very beautifully on pages 14 and 15, especially on page 15, the middle of the page, where he speaks of his father Lysanias. Lysanias means dissolver, and this can be very well applied to a spendthrift.^{xviii} Then the beauty of this. He calls his son Lysias, not Lysanias. In reverence to his father he gives his son a name reminding him of the name of his father, a name with the same stem.

It is worth noting that fundamentally his wealth is inherited, and he has acquired only a small part of it himself. Socrates points out that the fact that he is an heir, not an original acquirer, is the secret of his moderation in regard to wealth. "You are not attached to your wealth as if it were your product." It is in this connection that the comparison with fathers and poets arises.^{xix} Fathers are fond of their children because they regard them as their products; poets are also fond of their works in the same manner. This involves love of one's own. That foreshadows the broad problem of the *Republic*: communism. In the *Republic*, you cannot love anything as love of one's own. Nothing is your own. We come to that later. Cephalus presents himself as a real gentleman: a man of property, moderate, just, an Aristotelian perfect gentleman, at least up to this point. But Plato applies a kind of more precise analysis, and we see some non-gentlemanlike features beneath this very agreeable surface. He must have been a very nice man, but we all know that when we speak of a very nice man we stick to the surface a bit. We do not deeply analyze some very unpleasant things which would appear in almost all cases. Then Socrates raises the question, and here we approach the immediate subject: "What was the greatest benefit which you derived from your great wealth?"^{xx} In all such cases one must consider which other answers could have been given. The peculiar charm of such books is that you must enlarge the horizon and see which other answers could have been given. Then you see Cephalus revealed in his character by his answers. Which other answers could an old man have given?

Student: Leaving wealth to one's children.

LS: Or taking care properly of one's children, or contributing properly to the *polis*, and I don't know what other answers could be given. Cephalus limits himself severely to the advantage he derives now in his old age. He omits the other things. This kind of selfishness goes well with a

^{xv} 329c3-329d4.

^{xvi} 330a3-6.

^{xvii} Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1098b30-1099b8.

^{xviii} Plato *Republic* 330a7-b7.

^{xix} 330b8-c8.

^{xx} 330d1-3.

certain kind of patriarchalism. It shows itself in this answer. He lives entirely in his present situation, old age, and the fear of death consumes every other thought. He is in no means certain of these stories told of punishment after death, but he regards this as a kind of prudent insurance, just in case. There is a nice remark in 330d to e (page 17), where he speaks of two sources of his discomfort. First, the speeches or tales which are told about the things in Hades, and a few lines later: "And I myself [meaning in contradistinction to these speeches—LS] either by virtue of the weakness of old age or because one sees 'something' better in this advanced age; am apprehensive." Both the myth and Cephalus's own sentiments join or come together to bring about this thought. It is by no means the stories alone.

The next point has been very well understood by Mr. Stevens. Cephalus regards as the main benefit of his wealth that it gives him an opportunity to end his life justly and piously, and thus not to get into very great trouble afterward in the hereafter if such a thing exists. The justly here refers to men and the piously to gods. This is clear. The piety element is dropped by Socrates. He limits himself entirely to the question regarding justice. I don't have to dwell on this point. What is justice? Cephalus did not give a definition of that. He spoke about it and gave examples. Socrates gives these examples the character of a definition. Justice means to say the truth and to restore deposits.^{xxi} What do these things have in common? However vague[ly] a man expresses himself and even if he can give only a crude enumeration, there is some unity behind it. This may very well escape him, but it may be possible to discern it. Doesn't justice contain many more actions? What do they suggest regarding Cephalus's understanding of justice? What do they have in common most obviously?

Student: They involve relations with other people.

LS: Sure, but that would also be true of other crimes or their opposites. Justice is *the* social virtue. I had the impression they suggest something which we can call trust. Lying and not restoring deposits constitute a misuse of trust. Justice has something to do with trust; moreover, it has something to do with making trust possible. This means human society becomes possible. There is this immediate difficulty. Let us not do anything which hampers or endangers trust. What about trusting itself? Must we trust all men? Can we trust all men? We trust the trustworthy. We distrust those who do not deserve trust. We have immediately a strange difference of attitudes belonging to justice. We have a positive one toward those who deserve trust—the good—and a negative one toward those who do not deserve trust—the bad. This dualism, a different attitude toward good and bad, belongs to justice. We have here the root of Polemarchus and the root of the definition: helping friends, hurting enemies. This duality belongs to justice. I would like to mention one other point. There is a certain ambiguity in the Greek here. What is translated here as "truth-telling" means literally "truth." The context suggests the subjective term—veracity, truthfulness—but we must not forget completely the fact that here truth as truth is meant. But this is just a minor point.

A more important point, at least in the present context, is this consideration. Is the crude definition of deposits as an element of justice simply rejected? You know, the return of deposits and so on. The word "simply" occurs here. On page 19 (331c) Socrates says: "Shall we say this truth and returning deposits is *simply* justice?" What I am driving at is this: this first definition is

^{xxi} 331c1-3.

certainly very defective, but it is not meaningless. You could not say with equal right that it is justice to lie and not to return deposits. The general, the frequent, the normal is not to lie and to return deposits. The Platonic dialectic does not have the character of a complete relativization. Cephalus has seen something of justice. What he has seen is very insufficient, but it is something. Let us assume that he would have defined a just man as a man who does not kill other human beings. We could give him *n* examples of where we kill other human beings justly. Still, to say justice consists in not killing other human beings is truer than to say justice consists in killing human beings. The latter needs a special justification in terms of justice. Not killing human beings is not in need of a justification. Why this is so is a long question. The definition offered here is incomplete, but it is also revealing of the truth.

At this point the change from Cephalus to Polemarchus takes place, and Cephalus disappears with a laugh.^{xxii} This is interesting. Does Socrates laugh? He jokes very frequently, but he never laughs. Only on the day of his death does he laugh.^{xxiii} What does this laughing mean in such works as those of Plato? It means a certain sign of frivolity. A serious man does not laugh and cry.

Student: What is frivolous in Cephalus at this point?

LS: In an ultimate sense. If you only think of this change in Sophocles's statement from a master to many masters, you have the answer to that. There is a connection, as you may find out from Aristophanes, between laughing and this sexualness.

We see another point here, although a complete interpretation would take much too long.¹ [Polemarchus] begins with a quotation from Simonides, whereas Cephalus had quoted Pindar.^{xxiv} Pindar and Simonides were rivals in a way. Simonides, and I say this in all respect, was less pompous than Pindar appeared to some people. Someone who knew Greek poetry very well called Simonides the Greek Voltaire.^{xxv} Pindar is a kind of priest in comparison. But this point is added only in passing. Simonides's statement that justice is to give everyone what is due to him is refuted by the previous consideration. The argument was very simply this: return deposits. You cannot return a deposit of poison, however, if the fellow is in all probability likely to use it for poisoning. To give everyone what you owe to him, then, is not under all conditions true. This applies to Simonides as well. In 332a it is indicated that Simonides must have meant something else here. In the interpretation of Polemarchus, Simonides means that friends owe it to friends to do good and not evil. Justice is friendship. While there is no existent fragment of Simonides which bears out this view, there was certainly some reason for saying this. In the sequel (page 23) Socrates makes clear, or Plato makes clear the difference between Simonides and Polemarchus. The statement that justice consists in helping friends and hurting enemies is not Simonides' statement; it is Polemarchus's statement. Where Polemarchus got it from is another question. According to the small dialogue which precedes the *Republic* in the traditional order of the dialogues, which is now thought spurious, the definition of justice as helping friends and

^{xxii} 331d9.

^{xxiii} Plato *Phaedo* 115c5; Xenophon *Apology of Socrates to the Jury* 28.

^{xxiv} Plato *Republic* 331d4-e4, 331a1-10.

^{xxv} Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön*, Preface.

hurting enemies stems from Socrates, believe it or not.^{xxvi} At any rate it is not Simonides's definition; it only comes out of the basis of Simonides's definition because of some difficulties.

I would like to discuss this now in a somewhat more general way. When you read any of these various Platonic dialogues dealing with the virtues, for instance the *Laches*, you get all kinds of definitions which are wholly inadequate, and which Socrates refutes with ease. But no adequate definition of courage is given. It seems to be a hopeless and insoluble problem to find out what courage is. If you turn to Aristotle's *Ethics* and read the analysis of courage, you get a beautifully clear and precise picture of what courage is.^{xxvii} Was Plato or Socrates unable to give such an analysis as that of Aristotle, or did he not want to give such a definition? Let me apply this to the *Republic*. What is the traditional definition of justice?

Student: To give to each his due.

LS: A constant and perpetual will to give everyone what is his. That has something in common with Cephalus's returning deposits, although it is somewhat enlarged. Why did Plato not lead up to this perfectly sensible and adequate definition? Now in the seventeenth century, a very great man called Leibniz felt that that the traditional definition of justice which I have just quoted was bad as a definition because it includes the thing to be defined in the definition of itself. For example, what is his means, of course, what is his by right. Thus you say righteousness consists in giving to everyone what is his right. The same thing to be explained, righteousness, occurs in the definition. Leibniz suggested that it would be a better definition of justice to say it is beneficence tempered by prudence.^{xxviii} This makes sense. You have a fundamental beneficence, but you realize that you cannot be beneficent to everyone in every respect all the time, and thus it must be tempered by prudence. To execute a murderer, then, is beneficence tempered by prudence. It is beneficent to the others that he be executed. That seems to be at least a formally correct definition. The thoughts used by Leibniz here occur in our very Polemarchus section, when Socrates says the just man does not do harm to anyone.^{xxix} This means something like beneficence. Why did Plato not leave it at such a simple definition as the traditional definition?

How is it established that this table belongs to the University of Chicago? Why can't I take it home? We ignore the question of the physical impossibility. I assume the University of Chicago bought it, and that means there are certain ways of acquiring property which are established and enforced by law. This table belongs to the University of Chicago according to the law of the land. Could not the law be unjust? Is such a thing possible? Think of these interesting cases in the aftermath of a revolution. People bought confiscated property. It is their legal property according to law, yet some people feel in such cases that there is a flaw. I think it is impossible to deny that the law may be unjust either in the whole or in certain parts. If you give everyone what belongs to him according to law, then you may very well do *substantively* the unjust thing. Thus we must go to a deeper stratum of the problem. Since we assume, following Plato's way of thinking, that this initial definition, this traditional definition is not nonsense but contains a great

^{xxvi} Plato *Cleitophon* 410a7-b1.

^{xxvii} Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1115a6-1117b22.

^{xxviii} Possibly a reference to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Codex Juris Gentium* (1693), 274-275, in *Politischen Schriften*, vol. 5, ed. Hartmut Rudolph (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004).

^{xxix} Plato *Republic* 335b2-e6.

element of truth, we modify it as little as possible, or as necessary. We say justice consists in a constant and perpetual will to give or leave to everyone what is his, *according to what?* According to reason. Not according to law, but rather according to reason.

This raises a great problem. A man has a great amount of property. He spends it in nightclubs and other places of a similar character, thus ruining many other people morally and otherwise. This is not according to reason. A man who misuses his wealth doesn't deserve it. We take it away and we give it to people who can use it well. Who is to do the distributing or assigning? The judge there will not be a man armed with statutory law and precedents. He has to follow reason alone. What will be the approach? He will look at the men, what they need, what they can use, and what they can use well. This brings up the famous story, which I have so often retold, of the big boy who has the small coat and the little boy who has the big coat. This is a story told by Xenophon.^{xxx} In the schools of justice which they had in Persia—because they didn't learn there the three R's but rather justice—Cyrus, a future emperor, you might say, was confronted with this question. The big boy had taken away the small boy's big coat and had given him his small coat. He said this is correct. Now everyone has what is fit for him. But he was corrected, for the rule was that that belongs to everyone what he has bought or otherwise legally acquired. You see here the root of the later suggestion regarding communism. The just property is the one the individual can use well. If he does not use it well or is incapable of using it well, then it has to be assigned to someone else. One could develop from here on the whole scheme of Plato's *Republic* from this little point. But this is not the time, although we may do it on a later occasion. What I am driving at is this. The real argument of Plato, Plato's true analysis of justice, can come out only if we go much beyond what he says here explicitly. The transition from the discussion of justice in the first book to the discussion of justice in later books, book 2 following, implies such a dialectical destruction of the common notion of justice that Plato himself will eventually restore the conventional or traditional definition of justice. This is very important to know. This becomes defensible only on the basis of this long and very complicated way going through the whole *Republic*. We are now only at the very beginning.

We have seen what Simonides said (332c, page 25). Simonides did not² [mean to give everyone] what is owed or³ what you are indebted in the literal sense, but he meant to give everyone what is *fitting* for him. This would be justice. Simonides thus was a wise man, but unfortunately used this term "fitting" as synonymous with "indebted" or "owed to." Plato would probably say that he had very good reasons for doing this, but this is something else again.

We come now to the discussion of Polemarchus's definition: to help friends and hurt enemies. I have indicated that this definition can be immediately understood if we start from the phenomenon of trust, the thing which is underlying Cephalus's smelling of justice and what it is. That is just which makes possible trust between trustable men. The phenomenon of trust has this dual character: trust the trustworthy and distrust those who do not deserve trust. Justice is positive and negative. It gives good things to some and bad things to others. That is reflected in Polemarchus's definition of justice, that justice means to help friends and hurt enemies.^{xxxi} There is something more to that. What Polemarchus has in mind—whether he understands this or not, his name, Warlord, guarantees that he has this in mind—is the thought that war can be just. What

^{xxx} Xenophon *Education of Cyrus* 1.3.16-17.

^{xxxi} Plato *Republic* 332d7-9.

do you do in a just war? You help your city and you harm the other city. To help one's friends and to hurt one's enemies is thus an excellent expression of what we may call citizen morality. To be a patriot means to help your friends and to hurt your enemies. You distrust those who are not members of your society. So Polemarchus brings out another important element of justice; that there is a fundamental difference between political society and its members on the one hand, and those who are not members. This is bound to affect the phenomenon of justice in a very powerful way. Think only of the fact that lying, which we regard as a despicable thing in peace, is praised in war when used to deceive the enemy. The fact that this other problem comes up is indicated in the Polemarchus section. When Socrates says: "The just man does not harm anyone," this implies a questioning of the citizen morality as such.^{xxxii} We can compare the Socratic remark about that with the statement of Jesus: "It has been said to the old, love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy."^{xxxiii} This never occurs in the Old Testament, and this is always the Jewish answer to the Christian criticism. On the other hand, one must say that by virtue of the fact that the Jewish community was a particular community, one nation, it implied something of this kind. What Jesus meant was exactly to transcend the citizen morality, the morality of a nation as a nation. To that extent, the problem of Socrates and the New Testament is the same.

Now let us come to some more specific passages, 332c. To help one's friends is of importance. Who can help friends in the matter of health? Who can help this? The physician. Who can help best with regard to tasty meals? The expert cook. What is it that the friend can do in the way of help? Let me state it differently. Justice must be some kind of an art, but what does it produce? Health is produced by medicine. Sweetness of meals is produced by cookery. What does justice produce? What Socrates injects here, and in a wholly unwarranted way, is that justice must be an art. We will come back to that clause later. Look at 332c (page 25) when Polemarchus answers the question addressed to Simonides regarding medicine. What does he say about medicine? He says it is the art which gives to bodies medicines, food, and drink. Is this a good answer? Socrates had asked what does medicine give to what. What would you say? What could you say instead of what Polemarchus says?

Student: Gives these things to sick or feeble bodies.

LS: Gives health to sick bodies would seem to be a more reasonable answer. Why is this answer not so adequate? What he says is much too narrow, because medicine also burns and cuts. These things are neither medicine nor food and drinks. Why is the broad answer, health to sick bodies, not adequate? One has to go through this sort of investigation if he would understand this. In the first place, there are incurable diseases. Even in these cases the physicians give pills. There is a problem. You see medicine and cookery mentioned here as two arts. Those of you who know the *Gorgias* will remember that medicine is there presented as an art. Cookery is there presented as a non-art.^{xxxiv} Here it is supposed that they are both arts. What is the connection between the two? Plato makes these things not entirely without reason. What does cookery produce? That is said very clearly here. It gives sweetness. What does medicine give? Bitterness. Does this throw some light on justice? Certainly. Bitter and sweet: punitive justice is a crucial part of justice.

^{xxxii} 335d11-e5.

^{xxxiii} *Matthew* 5:43. A more literal translation would be: "You have heard that it has been said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy."

^{xxxiv} Plato *Gorgias* 462d8-466a3.

This duality of justice shows itself here in its immediate sense. Justice gives good things to friends and bad things to enemies, but good and bad things regarding health are best supplied by medicine, and good and bad things regarding sea and sailing are best supplied by the art of sailing. First we had medicine and cooking; now we have medicine and sailing. Cooking is replaced by sailing. This conveys something also. What does this mean, the composition medicine/sailing versus medicine/cooking? Sailing, at least in ancient times, was a very hazardous thing; one had the danger of drowning and so on. Justice is much too serious to put any emphasis on the sweetening element mentioned before. The seriousness of justice supplies us with a link to what follows in the next statement by Polemarchus. Justice has its place in fighting and fighting together. Fighting brings in the possibility of violent death. Is not justice also needed in peace? Of course. For what? In this section (page 27) you can see these things in this manner. For example, in [332e-]333[a]-beginning: "Shall we also say that for those who are not at war the just man is useless?" "By no means." "There is a use then even in peace for justice?" "Yes." Then it is pointed out that farming and shoemaking have such peacetime uses; the first for the acquisition of the harvest and the other for the acquisition of shoes. You see this little irregularity here. Socrates does not wait for Polemarchus's answer, but instead he suggests the answer. This is a deviation from the norm because no one would say without further ado that the art of shoemaking consists in *getting* shoes. It consists in *making* them. The emphasis is on acquisition. You see how the argument runs: fighting and acquisition. Is there a connection between war and acquisition? I should think so. A victorious war means acquisition. Acquisition thus falls in between fighting and use.

The theme [of] use comes up in a sequel. Here we find this more specific definition of justice that justice is needed for contracts, human associations, and so on; especially in such associations in which money is involved. Here Socrates comes very close to the crudest but very important meaning of justice in the narrower sense. Justice resides in exchange. This is by no means sufficient, but it is certainly important. The just man is he who does not cheat in exchange. This is one important part. Thus justice is of use during peace in matters of exchange and matters where money is involved. What does this mean? You want to use your money. You may want to buy a horse. Who could help you best, the just man or the expert in horses? Polemarchus answers quite reasonably, although not absolutely reasonably, the expert in horses. If you want to buy a car, on the one hand you may have a just man who knows nothing about cars. What is the use of seeking his advice about cars? If he is an expert on cars, however, his advice can be quite valuable. So for buying things or using money we might say the just man is of no use. For what can he be used? Certainly for safekeeping, because here you do not need any expertness for the locking-up of anything you want preserved. If that is so, Socrates concludes, justice cannot be something very serious. Its use is limited to things which are not used. The end of this argument, is summed up in 333e to 334b.^{xxxv} —[Socrates then considers further the example] of the safe-keeper and of the watcher. Who is best as the detective? Let us take this example more familiar at least to me instead of the keeper. The mental processes required for cracking a safe and for finding out who cracked it are the same. The art of the watchman or the guardian is identical with the art of the thief. You see what happens. Justice was reduced to perfect uselessness and limited only to the art of keeping things. By the identification of the art of the watchman with the art of the thief, the usefulness of justice is restored. No one would say that the art of the thief is

^{xxxv} The tape was changed at this point.

not useful in a loose way to him. Justice becomes not only the art of keeping but of getting, and getting by fair means or foul. There is another name for justice thus understood: the art of wealth getting. What is the difficulty in this argument? I hope I don't have to tell you that Plato was as much opposed to that as most of us are. What is the flaw of the argument that leads up to the conclusion that the thief is identical with the just man? Is it not true that in order to keep something you must know exactly the same things which the potential thief of this thing has to know? Is it not absolutely true? What is the use of a guard in a bank who does not know everything the thief knows about robbing banks, cracking safes, and so on? Without this knowledge, he would not be a good guard. Their art and their competence⁴ [are] identical. Neither has to know more nor less than the other knows. It completely coincides. What did he omit? On the basis of our ordinary way of talking about things, what would you say that Socrates omits?

Student: Both of them may know the same things, but it is clear that they do different things.

LS: They might even do the same things. Let us assume that the burglar got a key. Both would open the safe in the same manner. I admit that the one takes money out and the other sees that it stays in. In what is that difference of doing grounded? The *purpose* or *intention* is different. The argument disregards completely and deliberately the phenomenon of moral purpose. We can thus say that there is something wrong with the whole question. Aristotle would completely back us up in this. The fact that Socrates thinks always in terms of arts makes the phenomenon of moral purpose invisible. This is a very great indictment of Plato. What could be said in defense of that? The basis of Plato's gross blunder, which is an intentional blunder, is some reflection on moral purpose.

Let us look at the phenomenon from which we started. The just man is characterized by a constant and perpetual will to give everyone his due. This is all very good, but this does not mean that his action as a whole will be just. The action may be substantively unjust should the law be unjust. The moral purpose alone and knowledge of the law alone is not sufficient to make an action fully just. You have to know what is truly just: what is by nature just in this situation. The importance of moral purpose is at the most not higher than that of knowledge. A fully developed knowledge is an art. Plato goes beyond that, and perhaps we will see why he does this later on in the *Republic*. He would say that the moral purpose itself is constituted by some kind of knowledge. Thus it is legitimate, although also misleading, to speak of justice as an art. But there is a more specific mistake regarding justice as an art which Socrates makes. If we would say justice is knowledge and the man who possesses this knowledge cannot help but act justly, then we would only restate the Socratic riddle that virtue is knowledge.^{xxxvi} Socrates does something more here than saying justice is knowledge. What does he say in addition? He says justice is an art like medicine, cooking, sailing and so on. Justice is a special art. Maybe there are arts which are not special but all pervasive. Let us take the simple example of your buying a car. You would certainly be a fool to take with you a just man who does not have the foggiest notion of what a car is. On the other hand, if you were to take with you a man who knew everything about cars, although also a crook, you would also be rooked. What kind of man would you take with you if you are sensible? I think a man who is both just and an expert. This applies not only to cars or horses, but to anything. Justice is an art which affects all arts. It has a certain universality which has to be properly considered. This is completely disregarded in this part of the argument. But we must remember that Plato has promised in this part of the argument that he will give us a good argument about what moral purpose is; moreover, an account according to

^{xxxvi} See Plato *Meno* 87b2-96d4.

which moral purpose is knowledge of some sort.

Now let us see the rest of the argument, 334c, page 31. To help friends and hurt enemies; I think this is clear, and we can understand this. We understand in regard to the crude level in which this means one man scratches the back of the other in exchange for a similar service. If we take it on the highest level, it means to stick to your own country and your countrymen as against the foreigners. The difficulty here is this: nothing is clarified as to what friends and enemies mean. Socrates asks Polemarchus whether he means *seeming* friends or true friends. If you help your *seeming* friends, you are a very great fool; if you hurt your *seeming* enemies, you are also a great fool. You must be sure that you help your *true* friends and hurt your *true* enemies.

Then another issue arises. Does a just man hurt anyone? Socrates uses the simple example of a dog.^{xxxvii} If you hurt your dog or your cat, what happens? He will become vicious, and only a very great fool would wish to live with a vicious dog. In this respect, there is no difference between dogs and human beings. Essentially, then, do not hurt or harm anyone else. This is just plain common sense in Benjamin Franklin's sense of the word. Thus the just man will not hurt anyone, and the whole definition—helping friends and hurting enemies—is false. Needless to say, there is also a little difficulty here. Think of the example at the beginning—the man who is mad, yet wants his sword or his pills back.^{xxxviii} You help him by not returning these things to him. There are degrees of viciousness or madness at which, from the point of view of common sense, people sometimes say that he must be treated like a vicious dog. But what happens if you kill a vicious dog? What I am driving at is this. Of course it is true that harming human beings is foolish, but there are degrees of harming, if we would stick to this simple utilitarian example, which make the enemy harmless. This is the famous argument of Machiavelli.^{xxxix} This is the difficulty here. While it may be so that harming creates damage to you who harm, it is not universally true.

Student: With regard to the example of the dog and the horse, it would seem that the argument here is not in terms of whether it is good for you, rather [whether] it is good for the dog.

LS: No, instead I think you want to have a good and useful animal. There is a crude utilitarian argument here from which Socrates starts, but it is defective. It is not irrelevant, because there is a certain crude truth in it. It does not go to the root of the problem, however, and this is the weakness.

At the end of this passage (page 37) I would like to show you one thing. Socrates concludes the refutation of this definition by saying, "Since this definition is so wrong, it cannot possibly stem from a wise man like Simonides." He gives two other names here: Bias and Pittacus. Instead it is likely to stem from other men. He gives four names: Periander, Perdiccas, Xerxes or Ismenias the Theban.^{xl} Now these people were all wealthy and powerful rulers. If you make a simple computation here you will see that altogether there are seven names mentioned. If you take the seven together, you find the central one is Periander, a man famous for his elaboration of the rules required to preserve tyranny.

^{xxxvii} *Republic* 335b2-12.

^{xxxviii} 331c1-9.

^{xxxix} See Niccolò Machiavelli, *Prince*, 2nd ed., trans. Harvey Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, 1998), chapter 3, 10-11.

^{xl} Plato *Republic* 335d11-336a10.

Let me bring one further point to your attention. It is clearly stated that the just man does not harm anyone. Could one define justice as not harming anyone? This is a possibility, but we have to think it through. What would you say about a man who never harms anyone? He will never throw a child into a well, but if he sees a child falling into a well, in the same manner he will make no attempt to save him. What would you say about such a man? He would not be a just man. You have to go beyond this simple definition, and perhaps say that a just man is not only a man who refrains from harming others but also helps others. The just man is the beneficent man. That leads up to the Leibniz formulation that this is beneficence tempered by prudence. ^{xli}

Now there are two difficulties here. Why does Socrates not say that justice is beneficence? That would really save the phenomenon as we have seen it up to now. Consider the example of the failure to return the dagger to the madman.^{xlii} What is common to returning a loan to a normal man and not returning the dagger to the madman? They can both be understood in terms of beneficence. It is really not a bad definition. Why does Socrates not accept this? He continues to insist here that we know nothing about justice. What does he teach later on? A commonwealth will be erected. The chief part of this construction will be the guardians. What is the definition of the guardian? They are modelled on a dog. Dogs are friendly to their acquaintances and very nasty to strangers.^{xliii} Very nasty is not compatible with beneficence. The definition of justice in terms of beneficence does not do justice to the phenomenon of the *polis* as the independent society which as such has enemies. It is simple hypocrisy to call defeating an enemy helping him. Such an affair might accidentally help him, but this is still not ordinarily the purpose of a war. Beneficence would take away the harsh thing which is implied in any justice of which we can meaningfully speak.

But there is still another reason suggested by the argument up to this point. Why is it fundamentally false, apart from this political aspect, to say justice consists in beneficence? We had this today. Who benefits regarding the body? The physician. Who benefits regarding sailing? The pilot. In short, we would be back to the same problem of knowledge, and this does not become visible in beneficence. Everything seems to point to that. If we want to understand justice, we have to find out that kind of knowledge which implies justice. If there is such a kind of knowledge, the problem of moral purpose as something different is solved. If it does not exist however, the problem of moral purpose remains. Is there any other point you would like to bring up at this time? In a sense, we are bankrupt. We have not yet found out what justice is. In spite of the failure we have learned something. At this point Thrasymachus comes in, and he appears particularly shocked at Socrates's statement that the just man does not harm anyone. This revolts him, and we must see later on why this is the case. But we will discuss this section next time, and for the present I would like to consider any questions you might have on this section.

Student: In regard to the question of Socrates's piety or lack of piety, I notice in the first sentence it is indicated that Socrates planned to offer his prayers to the goddess. Would this be an indication of piety, or would you distinguish prayer and sacrifice here?

^{xli} Possibly a reference to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Codex Juris Gentium* (1693), 274-275, in *Politischen Schriften*, vol. 5, ed. Hartmut Rudolph (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004).

^{xlii} Plato *Republic* 331c1-9.

^{xliii} 375a2-376c5.

LS: I think the two must be distinguished. There are different kinds of prayers. There might be prayers which merely express gratitude without expressing wishes or demands. This would make a difference. Read the first and fourth chapter[s] [of book 1] of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* in this connection. This is a wholly inadequate answer, and I am conscious of this, to your question. You might rightly ask: Must Socrates not have believed in the existence of this particular goddess if he prayed to her?

Same Student: It would seem that this goddess had some significance for Socrates since he chose to go to such a low place to have dealings with her.

LS: I think it is commonly felt that this was a Thracian goddess. I think the obviously important point here is that it is an innovation. Socrates was accused later of not believing in the gods in which Athens believed, and also of introducing new divinities.^{xliv} Here he might say: Who is introducing new divinities? Not me, but rather the City of Athens. We can even do better than that. Why goddess? Apart from the historical argument, what does the introduction of a goddess at the beginning of the *Republic* suggest? The existence of goddesses is the strongest argument one might introduce for the equality of the sexes. This is proposed later on.^{xliv}

Same Student: There would be no problem if goddesses are always considered inferior to gods.

LS: Not necessarily. Still, they are far superior to human beings. If there are women who are goddesses, there can certainly be women who can be kings. We ignore the biological problem here. I think we should note that Plato later speaks again of Thrace.^{xlvi} You can easily find this point through use of the index. The Thracians were notorious for their savagery. Now this combination of Athenian mildness, because Athens was really relatively mild, and Thracian savagery is characteristic of the *Republic* as a whole. Consider the savagery of the guardians which Aristotle points out. Aristotle says that it is a wholly impossible statement that the guardians must be savage. No one must be savage.^{xlvi} Thrace thus foreshadows the combination of a certain wildness with gentleness. This is part of Plato's analysis of the political phenomenon. Plato might answer Aristotle in this vein. If you fight and if you use bayoneting, can you make a distinction between savage bayoneting and gentle bayoneting? The gentle bayoneting would only be less effective on the subject. I believe that. There is a description of bayonet training in the British Army prior to the First World War in which the officer in charge of the training makes very savage speeches against the Germans in order to get the trainees into the proper mood. I think one might imply from this that they would be better at bayoneting if they were in a savage mood. I think Plato would advance the argument against Aristotle that an element of savagery is required the moment you admit the possibility of war. I think this is what Plato has in mind here. Later on he mentions three nations together: the Greeks, the Thracians, and the Egyptians.^{xlvi} He might easily have introduced Egypt in this early discussion if he had chosen to do so. Thrace is savage, Egypt is crafty, and Greece is

^{xliv} See Plato *Apology of Socrates* 24b8-c1; Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.1.1, *Apology of Socrates to the Jury* 10.

^{xliv} Plato *Republic* 451d4-457b6.

^{xlvi} 435e1-436a3.

^{xlvi} Possibly a reference to Aristotle *Politics* 1327b37-1328a16.

^{xlvi} Plato *Republic* 435e1-436a3.

civilized. Were there any other points you wanted to make?

Student: I'm not too sure about the use of beneficence in the definition of justice. What is the weakness or problem there?

LS: Let me repeat. Who is most beneficent regarding health? Who *can* be most beneficent regarding health? The physician. One must always ask here, beneficence in what? Does not beneficence presuppose and essentially depend on some specific knowledge? Although the analogy of the arts is wholly inadequate, I think Plato would say something like this. You want to be kind, really kind, and not merely nice to some other human being. You cannot do it in any important matter if you do not *understand* what is involved. Thus people speak all the time of a kind and understanding man. This knowledge means knowledge of the soul of this individual, but this is not possible in an adequate way if you do not have knowledge of the human soul as such. You are always confronted with this problem. You want to be very kind to someone, but there is always someone else around to whom you also have to be kind. The question of priority arises, and you have to weigh who is in more need of it. You cannot leave it at knowing this particular individual's character. Thus the condition of beneficence would be knowledge of the human soul, and this is not such a simple thing to arrive at. For Plato this means philosophy. It might be said that only the philosopher can be kind. He would not deny that there are practically valuable imitations of that, but at the same time these are fundamentally defective.

Student: I was wondering whether the passage about the Seriphian had any overall significance here?^{xlix}

LS: I believe this has a clear meaning in the context of the whole book. Cephalus makes the statement. Themistocles was asked by a man from a small town: "If you had come from my small town, you would never have become the famous Themistocles." Themistocles answered: "If you had come from Athens, you would not have been more famous than you are now." Now what could this mean in the context of the whole? Human greatness or genius cannot come into its own except when the social conditions are favorable to it. This is a sensible statement. We should apply this immediately to Plato himself. Without Athens, no Plato. This is perfectly clear. They did not have this simple notion, rightly or wrongly attributed to people like the Stoics, that the great philosopher can emerge anywhere and under any conditions. Plato knew this. There are conditions which may be seen as favorable or unfavorable to the development of the mind. This brings up a great problem, and one discussed by Plato in book 2. We find a perfectly nice society in which no injustice of any kind is committed. Glaucon calls this a city of pigs.¹ This simple society disintegrates; selfishness, the desire to have more, disrupts this society. Then a counteraction against vice takes place. Only by virtue of this counteraction does the good city come into being. If man's viciousness were not developed, I think it clear that his mind could not develop. Development of the mind needs the destruction of a primeval, simplistic, harmless, innocent atmosphere. It is wholly irrelevant for our purposes whether this simplicity, innocence, etc., can be traced in fact to such a situation. It's always a question just how innocent these simple people are who are studied by anthropologists. Granted that we have to start hypothetically from such a beginning, to maintain it would lead to infinite stagnation. There must

^{xlix} 329e6-330a3.

¹ 372d4-5.

be this eruption. A solution in which there would be no injustice whatever is impossible. Plato points out clearly that all just things are also unjust. The solution can be found only if this whole to which justice and injustice contribute in very different ways were perfect. I think this is what Plato is driving at.

¹ Deleted Cephalus.

² Deleted "for."

³ Deleted "for."

⁴ Deleted "is."

Session 3: April 2, 1957

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —that is clear and admitted to be defective.ⁱ But the general notion that [the] goodness or virtue of a thing consists in doing its proper work well—

Student: I don't say there is a defect in that.

LS: I must have misunderstood you, because if a thing is in itself defective, say, a sick dog, of course it cannot do its proper work well.

Same Student: Due to the lack of its proper virtue.

LS: This is fundamentally the Aristotelian notion of virtue.ⁱⁱ There is only one other point where I would like to take issue. With regard to the idea that the advantage of the stronger is the advantage of the government, it is possible that the government may be dethroned by a revolution or something of this nature. It's easy for Thrasymachus to take care of that.

Same Student: Certainly after the overthrow, because then it becomes the government, but during the time of the revolution itself another problem is presented.

LS: The problem of anarchy. This would not really harm his position, because he would say that at that time there is no real government; the government is only on paper. That is not difficult. A more fundamental issue is this: Why does Thrasymachus give in to this strange absolutization, if I may call it that way, of each art? He sees the difficulty. Take the shepherd. You cannot separate the shepherd's art from its ministerial function, that it administers to the need of the master or owner of the flock. Every child knows that. Why does he give in? Why does he give in to this wholly strange argument?

Same Student: He began this whole line of reasoning when he said, following Cleitophon's suggestion, that what Thrasymachus meant was the advantage of the ruler as the ruler saw it even if he was mistaken,ⁱⁱⁱ these other things.

LS: Why did he do that?

Same Student: He sees that such a ruler would be a fool. The idea of his advantage of the stronger is that the stronger is not a fool. The just are the fools.

LS: But it is a question whether it comes out this way. What I am driving at is . . . ^{iv} If you would look at Plato's *Phaedrus*, where¹ [Polemarchus] is mentioned, you would see that Plato

ⁱ The session began with the reading of a student's paper, which was not recorded.

ⁱⁱ Possibly a reference to Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1097b22-1098a18.

ⁱⁱⁱ Plato *Republic* 340a3-b8.

^{iv} There is a break in the tape here.

had a certain regard for him.^v He was as good as practically every one of us. It cannot be simply reduced to stupidity that he is fooled in that way. Nor does this tell us why Socrates would use such inappropriate means as fooling a man in order to accomplish this. There must have been something in him which made him a victim precisely to this kind of argument. Take a clever politician as an example. He would never have fallen for that kind of argument, although he might have fallen for others. We must thus take this up as a broader question and try to understand the Thrasymachus situation in the context of the whole, at least of the whole first book.

It seems to me that the key to that section is what we may call the interlude, 340a to b (page 53). There is this conversation between Socrates and Polemarchus into which Thrasymachus breaks like a savage beast.^{vi} After the discussion has gone on for some time, however, Polemarchus jumps in, and he is answered not by Thrasymachus but by Cleitophon.^{vii} You have a dialogue on the second level between the second raters. This is the key to the whole thing. This is a very rare and perhaps unique case in the Platonic dialogues. Second raters take over the dialogue for a time without being asked by Socrates or someone else. They simply take over spontaneously. Polemarchus takes the side of Socrates, and Cleitophon takes the side of Thrasymachus. Altogether there are seven speeches, and the center of seven as you all know is four. The fourth speech is a speech by Cleitophon. Let us see what he says. "To do what is commanded by the rulers, that is just according to Thrasymachus." Let us start from that. The advantage of the stronger,^{viii} however, may be something much simpler than this. How do we call in ordinary parlance, *to do what the rulers command*? What forms do these commands take on? Law. What Thrasymachus means primarily is that the just is identical with the legal or lawful. That is a perfectly reasonable assertion to make at the beginning. Aristotle suggests in the *Ethics* that the lawful or legal things are in a way the just things.^{ix} Everyone would say that first; it is the most simple and obvious understanding of justice.

Now we see a very strange thing. In the *Republic* the question is raised: What is justice? The normal procedure in such cases is to give first the most obvious answer. What is courage (*Laches*)? Not to run away is the answer.^x That is the crudest and most obvious answer. In some Platonic dialogues, the most obvious answer is not given at the first. This is usually the case when the interlocutor is more sophisticated, perhaps falsely sophisticated. One may ask what piety is. The simple answer—to do one's duty toward the gods—is not given first.^{xi} There is a false sophistication there. The most obvious answer here is that the just is the legal, but this is not given as the first answer in the *Republic*. Why is this? Why do Cephalus and Polemarchus not give this simple answer? I would think that it involves this: to see a problem in the identification of the just and the legal requires some sophistication. Basically, a just man is a man who obeys the law. I think there is an implication in the answer that the just is the legal which prevents this answer from being given by Cephalus and Polemarchus. The law is the deed of the political

^v *Phaedrus* 257b1-6.

^{vi} *Republic* 336b1-6.

^{vii} 340a1-b9.

^{viii} 338c1-2.

^{ix} Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1129a32-34, 1129b11-27.

^x Plato *Laches* 190d7-e6.

^{xi} See *Euthyphro* 5d8-6a5, 6e10-7a1, 11e4-12e8.

community. It is necessarily a political answer. Cephalus and Polemarchus are strangers or recent immigrants. Since the dialogue begins in the Piraeus and in the house of an industrialist who is also a recent immigrant—the margin of the *polis*, so to speak—I think this is the reason why the book does not begin with a political definition of justice. Cephalus says justice consists in returning deposits or paying debts. This is certainly the emphasis which Socrates puts on it. We have not mentioned the point earlier that there is a certain usefulness in this definition for men like Cephalus. Wealthy men do not have to incur debts. Should they incur them, however, they can easily repay them. It is a simple matter for Cephalus to be just in such circumstances. In any event the justice he has in mind is private justice or the justice of exchange. This does not look to that broader whole, the *polis*. For Polemarchus, justice means the art of keeping and thus of taking away or getting. Justice is coextensive with the art of moneymaking. Moneymaking means peaceful warring or competition. But even peaceful warring requires association. We can say the social character of justice does come out in the first two definitions, but it is only on the subpolitical level. The political character of justice, its connection with authority, comes in sight only in the Thrasymachus section. With a view to later developments we can also say that Polemarchus and Cephalus realize that were there no property there could be no justice. This is the famous opinion of Locke.^{xii} But the other side, the point that where there is no authority there is no justice, is not clear at all in what they say. It is very clear in Thrasymachus. Thus the point that Hobbes discerned^{xiii} is seen by Thrasymachus, whereas the truth that Locke discerned is seen by these two moneymakers.

Let me offer one other point here. The somewhat greater sophistication about the extent of justice and its political ramifications comes in through Thrasymachus. Thrasymachus himself does not say that the just is the legal. This is not wholly accidental. The adjective derivative from *nomos* means also well-behaved. Thrasymachus is very ill-behaved; he is in a very ugly mood. Thus it is quite proper that he does not begin with the law and does not even mention it. Apparently he has been angered by Socrates's assertion that the just man does not harm anyone.^{xiv} He doesn't like that, and [you] get the feeling that [he] need[s to get] some harming out of his system against Socrates.² He has some desire to harm. In this section (what I call the interlude, 340 a-b) you see Polemarchus as a witness for Socrates. Polemarchus answers: "There is no need for a witness. Thrasymachus himself admits it." What does such an exchange remind you of? A courtroom. Polemarchus is a witness for Socrates, but he points out that you don't need a witness. You see something more of this later on when Socrates makes clear that he and Polemarchus have a common cause by the use of the first-person plural.^{xv} It is a lawsuit. According to Polemarchus it would seem that Thrasymachus is the accused and Socrates the accuser. Remember that section when³ [Thrasymachus] says: "Do not give these and these answers"?^{xvi} To begin with⁴ Thrasymachus appears as the accuser. He is indignant about the simplicity of Socrates and the fact that he feels Socrates has asked questions which he has not attempted to answer.^{xvii} He feels this is an easy way to win an argument. Thrasymachus is much more frightening than those characters in the *Gorgias* of which one is naturally reminded by the

^{xii} John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* IV 3.18.

^{xiii} Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter 13.

^{xiv} Plato *Republic* 335d11-e6.

^{xv} *Republic* 340c1-5.

^{xvi} 336b8-d4.

^{xvii} 337a3-7.

present situation.^{xviii} Thrasymachus forbids certain answers, and then in 337d he imposes a fine on Socrates. Glaucon vouches for Socrates's paying the fine. Does this remind you of something? Answers which Socrates might give are forbidden under threat of punishment. What does this suggest as a whole? What does Thrasymachus resemble?

Student: The *polis*.

LS: Later on we find a discussion which is based on this premise: what resembles a thing is the thing.^{xix} If we apply Platonic logic to what is happening here, we see that he who resembles the polis is the polis. We will say Thrasymachus is the *polis*. Let us see whether we can understand this strange suggestion. Now if Thrasymachus is indignant about the proposition that the just man does not harm anyone, and if we now replace Thrasymachus by the *polis*, does it make sense to say that the *polis* is indignant if someone tells it that harming is incompatible with justice? War would be impossible, and yet a city without war is impossible. A city means war in principle. A city means something like collective selfishness, and thus there is only one short step from this to the individual selfishness Thrasymachus has in mind. Let us now return to the starting point.

The just is the legal, and the legal is the work of the *polis*. Is this correct or precise, that the law is the product of the state? You have all had courses in political sociology. What do they tell you there? Consider Bentley, Truman, and so on.^{xx} The state doesn't exist for them; the common good doesn't exist for them. There are things *claiming* to be the state. In a more cautious and more accurate way this is the next step taken by Thrasymachus. He asks what a *polis* is. The *polis* as an acting being is the regime. There are either the many, the few, or the one. There may be intermediate groupings of the three. The law is the work of the regime rather than the *polis*. This means that it is the work of the specific group that rules. This may be the majority—democracy—or it may be a specified minority. This does not alter the situation. If we look at these people “realistically” we find that they are the source of the laws: the many, the few, or one.^{xxi} What guides them in establishing the law? With a view to what do they give the law?

Student: To their advantage.

LS: If we disregard politically uninteresting things, roads and things which have to be built under all situations, and look at the politically interesting things, then we see this. The just is the advantage of the stronger is a strict consequence from the starting point that the just is identical with the law and nothing but the law. Thus there is a certain kinship between what Thrasymachus says and between what certain present-day thinkers put forth.

Student: Isn't this related to the idea of positive law as most significant?

^{xviii} Polus and Callicles. See, for example, Plato *Gorgias* 466a4-467c2, 471a1-473e5, 482c4-486d1.

^{xix} Plato *Republic* 350c7-8

^{xx} Arthur Bentley (1870-1957) and David Truman (1913-2003) helped developed the so-called group interpretation of politics. See Leo Weinstein, “The Group Approach: Arthur F. Bentley” in *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics*, ed. Herbert J. Storing (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1962), 151-224. Strauss contributed “An Epilogue” to this volume (305-327).

^{xxi} Plato *Republic* 338d7-339a4.

LS: This is certainly legal positivism. There is no natural justice. The just is identical with the legal. Thrasymachus suggests that we cannot go beyond the idea that the just is the legal. Should we go beyond that, then we don't find any justice anymore. What does this mean? The ultimate which we reach by the analysis of policy embodied in positive law is authority. You might also say this is blind will. This is really expressed by Thrasymachus's action, his willfulness and refusal to listen to reason.

In 338a (page 45), Thrasymachus tries to cross-examine Socrates, but he has no success whatever in that. You may also note the comment here that Thrasymachus was obviously willing to speak in the hope that he might add to his fame. You see here the usefulness of a narrated dialogue. All of those things could not be made clear in a performed dialogue. This is only a passing comment. It appears in the sequel that Socrates and Thrasymachus agree in one respect. They seem to agree that the just is identical with the advantageous, although Socrates is not sure whether it is advantageous for the stronger.^{xxii} Thrasymachus is sure about that. This agreement is crucial. Why? The reason for the downfall of Thrasymachus is already here. We have seen up to now nothing but authority or will decreeing as it sees fit. Now we hear suddenly of advantage. What other element does this bring in?

Student: This seems to bring in the problem of knowledge.

LS: Exactly. It is not blind will; intelligence is also needed. Thrasymachus is thus in a great conflict here. [To] which of these two elements should he give priority? If he would go on with the will element, and simply insist on that, then certain things would follow. This argument is not developed, and it would be worth developing to see why Socrates does not argue it out on this basis, that the law is merely an expression of blind will. The argument is taken up on the basis of will directed toward advantage. This introduces the possibility of criticism. Even assuming the law is nothing but the advantage of the government or the governing group, you can still make a distinction between what they *believe* to be their advantage and what is *truly* to their advantage. This is also where social science comes in.

Student: In this case, Thrasymachus admits there is a natural end, but the social scientists deny that there is a natural end. There may be one implicit in their formulations.

LS: When they say there are values—which is a much vaguer term than advantage—and that nothing can be said about them, this is blindness. But then the question arises: Are such and such measures conducive to these values or not? The competence of the social scientist begins at this point. He can't say anything about the values, but he can say very much about what is meant to be conducive to the promotion of these values. This is the situation before Thrasymachus. I think they agree in this respect.

Now a question crucial to everything else arises shortly before this interlude. If the rulers command things which are not to their advantage, then they command their subjects to do things which harm the rulers.^{xxiii} There is a cleavage between justice meant to do what the rulers

^{xxii} *Republic* 339b3-5.

^{xxiii} 339b7-e8.

command and justice meant to do what is to the advantage of the rulers. The rulers can be mistaken. Thrasymachus could have gone on to say the just is the legal and what the rulers regard as their advantage. Legal positivism. He refuses to take this way as we see after the interlude. To the extent to which the rulers are mistaken they are not rulers.^{xxiv} This leads to what the translator calls the “ideal” ruler, the ruler in the abstract, and so on. Why does Thrasymachus take this course? It would have been very simple for him to say we cannot go beyond what the rulers decree. If you go beyond that, you are then beyond the realm where justice or injustice exists, because there is no law without the decree. He says that if the rulers are mistaken and decree something that is not to their advantage, it is strictly speaking not right. What is the reason for this position?

Student: It would seem that if we stop with the statement that the just is what seems to be just to the rulers, then Thrasymachus can have nothing to teach. He is fishing for students here.

LS: The self-interest of Thrasymachus as a teacher of rhetoric and the political art is involved. Thrasymachus stands and falls with the contention that intelligence is necessary in politics. Compare this with the situation of the social scientist today. Let us assume social science were wholly [necessary]. Would the social scientist not absolutely ruin himself in the eyes of the Rockefeller Foundation and all other foundations in the world by taking a contrary position? We must not underestimate the vested interests which arise with the existence of such groups. But it is also much more than that; there is also a sincere and honest belief in the intelligence of science. There is a conflict now between two elements in Thrasymachus. There is this identification with the *polis* and brutality; there is also an identification with art in his sense: science, knowledge, expertness. He is caught between these two things. The mediation between these two things is effected by his selfish interests. If there is no politically relevant knowledge, then Thrasymachus is of no use; moreover, his art would not even be an art, because a useless art is no art. Other people might be able to question the need for light regarding political matters, but Thrasymachus cannot even afford to do so. There exists the possibility of judgment in this respect. The question will be raised: Did he act wisely with a view to his end or not? We see that Thrasymachus's consciousness of being an artisan induces him to say that, to conceive of ruling as an art. If the ruler is not intelligent in his ruling, he is not a ruler. Those sentiments were shared by Socrates. The ruler as an artisan never errs. Moreover, this art of ruling is wholly divorced from any other consideration except that implied in ruling. The problem of getting money is an entirely different art, the art of money-getting. This may be accidentally combined in the same individual, but this has nothing to do with the art of ruling as such. It is hereafter admitted by Thrasymachus that every art is self-contained and of equal rank with any other art.^{xxv}

It is clear that ruling must be an art if Thrasymachus is to have any chance of success. This is compatible with the thought we have seen in the *Gorgias* that the art of ruling or of teaching to rule is the highest art.^{xxvi} The question which may be raised is this: Why does he not insist on this hierarchical structure of the arts? We should keep this in mind.

Consider the two examples, the physician and the pilot (341c-d). The physician is the servant of

^{xxiv} 340c6-341a4.

^{xxv} 341c4-342e11, 346a1-e7.

^{xxvi} Plato *Gorgias* 451d1-452e8.

the sick; the pilot is the ruler of the sailors. This is already an indication of the problem of ruling. Ruling also means serving. The fact that the pilot is a sailor and sails on the boat is accidental. As a pilot he is only the man in charge of the art of the pilot, and it is purely accidental that this cannot be exercised except on a boat. This is an exaggeration of something Aristotle explains very nicely in the *Politics* (1279 a). Let us take the gymnastic trainer. Is this an art? The gymnastic trainer is concerned with money-getting and making the bodies of these people better. While showing them all kinds of exercises, he also takes exercises. His own body improves for other people's money. Aristotle rightly indicates this is accidental. Take the teacher of swimming. He must swim while he is teaching, but this is not his primary function. The fact that he swims in the process is purely accidental; his primary function is to teach people how to swim. Similar considerations apply to the ruler. If they have some accidental benefit from ruling, this still has nothing to do with the function of ruling as such.

He develops in the sequel the doctrine of the isolation of the various arts (341d). Each art is perfect in itself. Arts have been invented for the improvement of things which are not perfect unless arts are applied to them. If the human body were simply perfect, one could say that gymnastic training and medicine would not be necessary. But these arts are not in their turn in need of an art which improves them. Why is this so? The argument is developed in 342a (middle of page 61) where he makes this statement: "Does each art require another art to consider its advantage, and is there need for still another for the considering art, and so on, or do the arts look out for their own advantage?" Is this a complete disjunction? If an art is not perfect in itself and thus needs an art governing it, then this governing art needs a further art to govern it. This could go on indefinitely. No art would be possible. Is this complete? Can we say either that each art is self-sufficient or there is a vicious regress? What is the alternative?

Student: Some arts are imperfect, while some art or one art is perfect. One rules the others.

LS: Let us say that some are ministerial and others are ruling. Ultimately this would lead to only one art as the controlling, mastering, architectonic art. Why does Thrasymachus not see that? It would have been easy for him to say there must be an architectonic art and that the art of rhetoric is that art. Why does he not do that? Perhaps he really was too bewildered; the discussion may have gone too fast for him. This is one point, but what is the consequence? This is always good to consider if you are confronted with an otherwise unintelligible statement. What are the consequences? What does it amount to? At the present time we have the notion, contrary to the proper notion that there is a hierarchy of arts, that all arts are on the same level. This problem, the problem of which of these is the correct understanding, has a political equivalent. What is that?

Student: Democracy and aristocracy or monarchy.

LS: On the one hand, there is a democracy of the arts, and here there is no ruling art. But there must be one art at least connecting them. In a democracy, this equality is possible only if there is some form of order which keeps it together. What is the all-pervasive art (if we may assume there is no controlling art) in Thrasymachus's scheme?

Student: The moneymaking art.

LS: What is the special relation of the moneymaking art to the workings of ancient democracy? Every citizen is paid for ruling. It is also clear that all shoemakers, all carpenters, all workers at the same time exercise the moneymaking art. While this moneymaking art is all pervasive, it is not and does not claim to be the ruling art. The denial of the architectonic art leads to the consequence that the ruling architectonic art is replaced by an all-pervasive art. Something of this nature is obviously necessary to bind these things together; moreover, in a way it must be lower than all these other arts.

Student: Doesn't it become a ruling art?

LS: Look at Thrasymachus. What would he say if you were to ask him whether the art of rhetoric was inferior to the art of moneymaking? According to what he understands by his art, the mere fact that the moneymaking art is exercised by everyone shows that it is low. Unity is not found in a ruling or highest art but in some lower art which accompanies all other arts. Whether this all-pervasive thing does not take over the ruling position by default is another question. Basically, here we have the situation that the place of the architectonic or ruling art is taken by the lowest art which necessarily accompanies all other arts. I do not know whether this is sufficient.

Student: I don't believe it is. This shows the consequence of his taking the position that the moneymaking art must serve as the unifying art, but it doesn't show why he couldn't have stated that rhetoric is an all-comprehensive art which organizes the others.

LS: Let us start from another angle. If we take the art of the shepherd, we see this is obviously unintelligible except in the framework of sheep, the master for whom they are being taken care of, and, in between the two, the shepherd. If you isolate the shepherd's doings from both sides, this becomes wholly unintelligible. We can enlarge that. The whole system of arts is based on a certain mutuality. The shoemaker produces shoes primarily for the benefit of others, although it is possible that he also makes shoes for himself. He is paid for this so that he may buy the products of the arts of others. The underlying premise is a certain sociality among men, without which the arts are unintelligible. What I call here the democracy of the arts disregards this mutuality. Could Thrasymachus's basic motivation not be a denial of that mutuality and thus also of a hierarchic order?

Student: There would be no need for a universal art. Each in the city would practice his own particular art; each art would have its own area and there would not have to be a reference to a unifying art.

LS: This would make impossible the notion that is developed somewhat later that justice is mere nonsense. Prudence cannot coexist with justice, because if human life means essentially a life of mutuality, then prudence requires justice, the preservation of that mutuality. There seems to be a connection between the individual and extreme egoism which Thrasymachus recommends, each isolated individual taking care of his own interest, and a kind of egoism of the arts. A further question arises: Is Thrasymachus's implicit assertion that all arts are equal, which is contrary to his self-interest, not a kind of recognition of justice, given certain false premises? Look at it this

way. If all men desire by nature to have more, and if this is universal, then in this respect all men are equal. Must this not find some recognition in any doctrine of justice? While Thrasymachus denies it in his teaching on justice, where he points toward tyranny,^{xxvii} he recognizes it somehow among the arts. I submit this as a possible explanation. Now how does this transition take place? First—

Student: I wonder if someone might not be able to push the argument that even if mutuality is part of the nature of man, there still is no need for any architectonic art in order to preserve or to keep each in its sphere. Would there be some other way of keeping each in its proper sphere without setting up a hierarchy?

LS: How? If you say the art of the shoemaker and the art of the tailor are on the same level, I think this would make sense. But what about the maker of buttons or pins? Are not buttons necessarily directed toward the garment rather than the other way around? Would a man legitimately go to a shop with a button and ask that a suit be made fitting around that button? This is funny, because the true relation of suits and buttons is the other way around. I think a simple egalitarianism of the arts is impossible. I know a pupil of Dewey who defended this other position, and he occasionally made the remark that the garbage collector and the classical archeologist were both on the same level. Both permitted fulfillment. I think this disregards the specifics, the functions of each, and looks only at this external thing, self-fulfillment. Self-fulfillment has the same function in that scheme as moneymaking has here. It is all pervasive.

Same Student: But there would be no problem of hierarchy if each only wanted what his nature suited him to do. They wouldn't have to be ordered if each would keep himself confined to his own sphere. There would be no need of anyone enforcing this. The very fact that they don't, however, implies that they recognize that the spheres are not equal, and implies that they admit the necessity of hierarchy.

LS: This I don't quite see. I think the strict notion of art as it is here presupposed means that everyone sticks to his art. The fact that everyone doesn't brings in other considerations: the need for government and so on. But this does not belong to the strict argument regarding the arts as it is outlined here. The argument here is that no art is in need of any supplement; each art is sovereign. Its strict equivalent would be a social doctrine of the Lockean type: everyone is equal in the decisive respect. Everyone is equally concerned with self-preservation, and self-preservation is the most important consideration.^{xxviii}

Let us look a bit at the sequel. Thrasymachus draws the attention of Socrates to the fact that this notion that every art simply serves its subjects, whether human or non-human, is simply not correct. Consider the art of the shepherd. The shepherd serves the sheep for the sake of the master of the sheep. Could the same not be true of the art of ruling? The ruler rules the subjects and fattens them for his own benefit.^{xxix} Why not? If we state the argument in this way, let us look at Thrasymachus himself. Where would he fit in if the sheep situation is the most illuminating regarding the art of ruling? Would he be a ruler or would he be a shepherd? He

^{xxvii} *Republic* 343e7-344c8.

^{xxviii} See John Locke, *Treatises*, I, sec. 88; II, sec. 4, 6, 54, 168, 172.

^{xxix} Plato *Republic* 343a1-c1.

would be a shepherd. He would be an ill-paid person who talks to the people, who uses rhetoric for the benefit of the designs of the rulers. What would this require on the part of Thrasymachus? How would it work? It remains true that the just is solely for the benefit of the ruler. He takes care of the sheep for the advantage of the stronger. Everything is fine, but what would be the consequence for him? He would have to be just. He would have to admit a fundamental difference between the rulers and the ruled, and he would also have to include himself among the ruled. He could never aspire to tyranny, although he might engage in certain minor crimes. Occasionally he would kill a lamb on the sly, although this must never come out. This is the difficult situation he finds himself in. Thrasymachus is thus compelled by his situation to be just. Justice exists for present-day social science in the problem of loyalty or integrity. This cannot be questioned by the social scientist if he does not want to destroy social science.

Student: When you say he would have to be just, does this mean just according to his definition of justice, and only according to his definition?

LS: He must be concerned with the advantage of the ruler. This implies loyalty, integrity and what have you. In the moment he is unreliable as a shepherd, he is certainly bound to be thrown out. This is the difficulty.

We have still to consider the transition from the definition that justice is the advantage of the ruler to the contention that justice is folly. How does this come about? We have seen that there was a very strict argument leading from the idea of justice as the legal to the thought that justice is the advantage of the ruler. How do we go from here? If the just is the legal and the legal is what the ruling group lay down as the law, and this law is motivated by what they consider to be their interest, then the just is clearly the advantage of the ruler. The ruler can do this only if he is the stronger and can compel obedience. If this is so, then it is true that the just is the advantage of the stronger. This is the strict argument advanced before, but how do we come from here to the entirely different contention that the idea of justice is folly? This is not too difficult, but still we must make it explicit.

Student: Everyone who is just serves someone else's interest. He commits his entire self to the advantage of the ruler.

LS: He neglects his own advantage in the process. What about the rulers? The rulers do and compel others to do what is to their advantage. In their case this would coincide, but of course justice would have been emptied of all meaning in the process.

Same Student: Justice would be either doing the advantage of another or doing the advantage of one's self in such cases.

LS: If one rules. In the case of the rulers that would be coincident, but in the case of the others there would be a real opposition.

Student: Isn't that the reason Thrasymachus then calls the rulers unjust?

LS: The rulers are concerned only with their own advantage. Here is where another notion of

justice—which is of great importance, incidentally—comes in. Justice is the good of other people, as distinguished from one's own good.^{xxx} The implication is that to be concerned with the good of other people has no basis whatever. This means there is no mutuality underlying everything, which makes it a matter of prudence to be just.

In the sequel (344d-e) we see a strange appeal on the part of Socrates. Socrates says: "You seem to care nothing for us and have no concern whatever whether we should live worse or better." Socrates somehow takes it for granted that Thrasymachus cares for them, and thus that he is not unjust simply, caring only for himself. What does this mean? Thrasymachus is not simply unjust. How can we understand that? You must not be too impressed by the savagery of his appearance. Sometimes people are guilty of behaving very terribly, and yet we cannot call them simply unjust.

Student: The fact that he is a teacher would seem to be of relevance here. A teacher must care to some extent⁷ [about] the progress of the learner.

LS: True, but also he indicates that the perfect and most complete man would be the tyrant.^{xxxi} He is not a tyrant in fact, but could he not be a potential tyrant? Would a potential tyrant talk that way? The fact that he talks that way in presenting this doctrine is proof that in a way he does not believe in it—at least to the extent that his own life is concerned. Whether this is due entirely to an awareness of his own impotence or to some better element in him, this we must see.

Same Student: Are you asking whether a potential tyrant would teach tyranny?

LS: I think he would really undermine his own possibilities. There are certain things which can be done but which can never be said with any prospect of success. Precisely, the potential tyrant would pretend to be a servant. The real nastiness and viciousness is done by people under the pretense of public service and not on the basis of such doctrines as Thrasymachus advances here. That these doctrines might very well have a bad effect is another matter. A man who would say "I want to treat you like sheep!"—such a man will never become a ruler. He would have to say something else. In this connection now Socrates makes an appeal to Thrasymachus's self-interest in teaching the truth to others.^{xxxii}

In the sequel, Socrates returns to the strict concept of art. The shepherd as shepherd is concerned only with making the sheep good. His art has nothing to do with the use of the sheep made by the eater. The same applies to every ruling.^{xxxiii} We have discussed this before. This means a complete atomization of the structure of the arts. Each is completely independent of the other. In the sequel there is another interlude, but here it is not between two men of the second rate but between Socrates and Glaucon. This is of great importance for the later course of the argument. Consider 347a to 348a to b, where Glaucon interrupts. This is a very important passage, and we must see what you made of it. What is the point where Glaucon interrupts?

^{xxx} *Republic* 343c1-d3.

^{xxxi} 343e7-344c8.

^{xxxii} There is a break in the tape here.

^{xxxiii} 345b7-347a6.

Student: Where Socrates makes the point that no one rules except for pay, and that the three forms of pay are money, honor, and penalty for refusal.

LS: To put it in a more precise manner: no one *desires* to rule. Everyone looks upon ruling as a burden and insists on remunerations. There are three kinds of remuneration.

Same Student: Glaucon indicates he can understand the first two, money and honor, but he cannot understand the third form of remuneration, penalty for refusal to rule.

LS: What is that penalty?

Same Student: Socrates makes the penalty being ruled by worse men. For this reason the best, who don't covet money or honor, consent to rule for the sake of escaping being ruled by worse men than themselves.

LS: This has very grave implications. In 347d (page 83) we see the ruler does not naturally seek his own advantage. Every man of understanding would rather choose to be benefited by another than to be bothered with benefiting himself. What does this imply? What does Socrates presuppose? Ruling is a sheer burden, and being a burden one must have some remuneration for it. Granting that ruling is a burden, could not one say that it is a duty and duties are burdens? What does Socrates say about this problem of duty here?

Student: He says nothing. In fact, he says that everyone would contend for immunity from office as eagerly as they contend for office now.

LS: In other words, Socrates accepts, at least for the time being, the principle of selfishness. To do something which benefits others and which does not benefit you is unreasonable. This is what Thrasymachus says. Socrates is thus committed to showing that justice is to the benefit of the men who are just. What people sometimes call the utilitarianism of Socrates is involved here.

Same Student: Insofar as justice involves ruling.

LS: But the principle appealed to is clearly stated without any regard to ruling in particular. To benefit others without having a benefit for yourself is foolish. We must keep this in mind. I think we may also note the thought that perhaps the artisan is only serving, and thus the artisan must have an external award or reward. In the highest sense, however, self-interest and art would coincide; self-interest and complete dedication or self-forgetting would coincide. What is that art? Philosophy. So you see how important this point is when Socrates says earlier to Thrasymachus: "We agree as to this—that justice is advantage." It is only the matter of deciding the advantage of whom.^{xxxiv} Socrates would not be satisfied if such an advantage of justice for the man trying to be just is not proved.

Student: This passage might also include the thought that this complete unification, the self-interest and the self-forgetting, would probably never occur on the political level.

LS: I believe there would be some difficulties there. At the end of this Glaucon section, 348a-b, a question of procedure arises. How shall we discuss this problem? “If we oppose him [Thrasymachus—LS] in his set speech enumerating the advantages of being just and he replies, and we rejoin, we shall have to count up and measure the goods listed in the respective speeches and we shall forthwith be in need of judges to decide between us; but if as in the preceding discussion we come to terms with one another as to what we admit in the inquiry, we shall be ourselves both judges and pleaders.”

Glaucon agrees that this is good. Socrates then asks him which method he likes best. Glaucon indicates he likes the one Socrates has proposed. This decides the whole thing. Instead of a real “scientific” discussion, they choose to do something further. They might make a list under the headings justice and injustice, and write down all the advantages of each prior to counting them. Counting may not be enough. There may be many more advantages here than there, and yet the former may not be as significant. We have to weigh them. Later on, they do that in the *Republic*.^{xxxv} But Glaucon, at the suggestion of Socrates, indicates they should proceed in the way of the dialogue, and this leads to the fatal consequence that we find out nothing about it.

At the beginning of the next discussion, Socrates tries to catch Thrasymachus by luring him into saying that justice is unprofitable but noble. Thrasymachus avoids this. He is to begin with unprepared to say that justice is the same as vice, although later on he admits it when left no other choice.^{xxxvi} If seeking one’s own advantage is the fundamental human fact, then the difference between virtue and vice can only be [that] being good at seeking one’s advantage is virtue. The opposite, being bad at seeking one’s interest, is vice. This is inevitable. He has a certain conventional resistance at the moment, but this is eventually overcome in the sequel.

Student: Does he ever say it in so many words?

LS: I think only by implication. Injustice becomes identical with many of the good things. I think it is inevitable, and his resistance is only a sign that he has had some conventional training. How does the argument go in which Thrasymachus is shown that justice is identical with wisdom or prudence?^{xxxvii} It is not terribly important now, but we must mention it.

Student: He uses the example of music.

LS: But the argument has a clear structure. The just man wants to have more than the unjust [man] with regard to justice. The just man wants to be superior in justice to the unjust, but he does not want to be superior in justice to the just. The desire for having more is limited in the case of the just. The unjust man, however, wants to be superior in injustice not only to [the] just but also to every other gangster. There is an unlimited desire for having more on the part of the unjust as contrasted with a limited desire for having more on the part of the just. In all forms of wisdom or understanding there is a certain desire to be superior. Take the physician who wants to be superior as a physician to the layman. He does not want to be superior to another physician. We can conclude that the just man is similar to the wise or prudent man; his ambition is limited,

^{xxxv} Possibly a reference to 576d2-588a2.

^{xxxvi} 348b8-349d12.

^{xxxvii} 349b1-350c11.

while the imprudent man's ambition is unlimited. Then we make a crucial observation: what resembles something is that thing. He who resembles the prudent man is the prudent man. The just man resembles the prudent man and thus is the prudent man. A really atrocious argument. Why does it convince Thrasymachus, or reduce him to silence?

Student: Is Socrates suggesting here that you and I are the same; you and I are in a similar position and we have a mutual self-interest with respect to all the others?

LS: No, but I think the idea of rhetoric is significant here. In the strict sense a rhetorical argument frequently consists of similes. The treatment of these similar things here gives the argument a certain power over Thrasymachus. But this is not enough. It is quite clear from what Thrasymachus says in the sequel that he is reduced to silence but completely unconvinced. He has been tamed but not convinced.^{xxxviii} Why could he, who seemed to be such an untamable beast at the beginning, be tamed?

Student: It's clear that all of the preceding arguments have been directed at Thrasymachus's science. The validity of it has been questioned, and the matter of its trustworthiness has been introduced. The suggestion is that Thrasymachus is both ignorant and that he has overreached himself in attempting to sell such poor goods. It's only natural that Thrasymachus should be silent after being humiliated in this fashion before the group.

LS: I don't want to go into this in detail at the present time, but if you would look up Plato's *Phaedrus* and also Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, you would see that Thrasymachus's rhetoric had this peculiarity: he played on all the passions.^{xxxix} He regarded it as crucial for the orator that he be able to play on the passions. It should be noted in connection with this section that while anger can be played, blushing cannot be played. The acting stops there. Let us begin from the crucial question: Why could Thrasymachus be tamed? What is the content of the arguments which prove so effective in this respect? The just man claims to be superior to the unjust regarding justice but not [to] the just, in the same way as the shoemaker claims to be superior regarding shoemaking to the layman, but not to other shoemakers. There must be a connection between the taming of Thrasymachus and the use of these particular arguments taken from the arts. Socrates's arguments, no matter how defective, appeal to something in Thrasymachus. That something is a genuine concern with being a good craftsman in his craft. This is one part of Thrasymachus. The other part is that which he plays here: the *polis*. Socrates uses this one part of Thrasymachus, his concern with craftsmanship, to overcome the other. This concern with and respect for craftsmanship stands in a certain tension with what I call the brutality of mere ruling. This conflict or this duality in Thrasymachus has a certain analogue in Socrates himself. What enables Socrates to play on this duality of city and craft or art? As we have seen in the conversation between Socrates and Glaucon during this interlude, there is a tension between doing and thinking. This difference between doing and thinking, between the practical and the theoretical, has a certain similarity with the difference between the city and the arts as visualized by Thrasymachus. Thrasymachus has some understanding of art, but he has not sufficiently

^{xxxviii} 350d9-e6.

^{xxxix} *Phaedrus* 267c7-d2. Thrasymachus, who is identified as a Chalcedonian in the *Republic* (328b6), is evidently the Chalcedonian man spoken of here. See 266c2-5, 269d6-8, 271a4-7. See also Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1404a13.

reflected about it. His insufficient reflection about what art means makes it possible that he can be seduced into denying the existence of an overarching architectonic art. Each art is perfect in itself as far as he is concerned, although this is actually contrary to the truth. The reason for this admission could very well be the fact that he had such a high regard for art as art. His regard is a misplaced and unintelligent understanding, but the genuine thing here is his respect for the arts.

There is another point which we must under no circumstances forget. In 351a to b, he has not only been reduced to silence—although this might not mean much, as we have seen in regard to Calicles in the *Gorgias*—but he has been brought into a condition where he wants to please Socrates or to do a favor for him. He has really been tamed, although he says he is wholly unconvinced. He indicates that he will only say “yes” and “no” so that Socrates may have his little game. There are certain occasions in which he goes beyond this mere yes and no. One of these cases is in 351a to b, where Socrates takes up the question of the unjust city. Here he says explicitly that the best city would be unjust. It would try to subjugate other cities and so on. Socrates's question (bottom of page 95) which does not come out in the translation at all, implies this: the unjust city will do that—will try to enslave other cities—and will succeed in that. The question is whether it will keep its conquests if it does not change its attitude toward the conquered. This is the great question of the Athenian empire. Socrates is driving at the question whether perhaps there is some selfish and brutal need for justice if you wish to rule. Next is the famous example of the gang of robbers.^{x1} The absolute necessity for justice is proved by the fact that precisely the most criminal of men, gangsters, must have a gangster justice. The leader of the mob, who would constantly deprive the mob of their just due or who would show favoritism, or something of this nature, would soon lose his hold on the gang. That is certainly true. What do you think of this argument? How much does it prove regarding justice?

Student: Don't we have to raise the question whether you can call any cooperation justice, or is there perhaps—

LS: Oh, no! Here we have five people, and we see that they commit a major burglary. There must be a just division of the spoils; at least a division they regard as just.

Same Student: They have to agree on a division of the spoils.

LS: I think [that] if we assume these people are not particularly dumb, we can be assured that if they are habitually neglected in this division, then they would do something about it. I think it makes sense to say that even a gang of robbers requires some justice if it wants to continue to rob. That applies to every society.

Same Student: But is justice linked with the purpose of the society or the purpose of the agreement?

LS: Is it necessary? Here the appearance of justice on the part of the leader of the mob won't do; he must really be just. He must give them what according to the consensus of the group each one deserves. If he does not do this, he will destroy his gang.

^{x1} Plato *Republic* 351c7-e5.

Same Student: They may simply be satisfying what their idea of justice happens to be.

LS: In a very rough way I would feel their idea of justice is very similar to ours. The greater the danger, the greater the toil, the greater the brainwork required, then the greater should be the reward. If someone is useful only for manual work involving little or no danger, this is obviously deserving of a smaller reward than the other tasks involved. I think this is the same.

Same Student: If there is such justice among thieves, aren't we led to ask whether there is something better than justice or something beyond justice?

LS: But what is the essential difference here? What is the difference between the justice among thieves and the justice simply?

Same Student: The end of the justice.

LS: The whole enterprise of the gang is unjust. More precisely, the gang behaves unjustly toward outsiders; among themselves they may be just. What about states? Does one not sometimes have the impression that there is a reasonable degree of justice within the state but that the relations between states are less obviously ruled by considerations of justice? One could feel that the first difficulty here might stem from the status of international law. This might be the first question. What is the status of that which regulates the relations between a state and other states? Interestingly enough, this is not the argument as Plato pursues it. How does Plato establish the difference tacitly between the gang of robbers and his perfect society? This question is answered almost immediately, in book 2, when he speaks of the education of the guardians. The guardians are trained in two virtues: courage, and temperance or moderation.^{xli} In a crude way the gangsters are also trained in courage. What is the status, however, of temperance or moderation in the criminal world? I believe there is no great concern with that. This would be a crucial difference for Plato. What is the character of the society and its members in the one case and in the other case? If the society consists of people who completely lack any notion of self-restraint or self-control and thus the other things, the higher things that go with that, certain consequences follow. That is the primary difference for Plato. Whether and how far this shows in the relations with other states is a very moot question.

Student: Don't the gangsters even exercise self-control and moderation with respect to each other? Something of this must prevail if they are not, as Plato points out, to have their hands at each other's throats. If they were really completely immoderate, they couldn't even act as a gang.

LS: Certainly. But how do they spend their ill-gotten gains? Do they spend it on the improvement of their souls? This is what Plato means by this. This is the most obvious and massive difference. To what extent the difference between the gang and the *polis* can be founded on considerations of foreign relations is a very difficult question for Plato. We come to that when he speaks of war.^{xlii} There is only one more point I think we should mention at this stage. At 352b (page 101) the question is raised whether the just live better than the unjust. Are they happier than the unjust? He says that this question has not been answered before, but has it not

^{xli} See *Republic* 376c7-411a1, for example, 399c1-4, 410e10-411a1.

^{xlii} 422a4-423b3.

been answered? What did the previous argument say (351c to 352c)? If you look more closely you will see that what Socrates tries to show first is that from the point of view of action, in particular of joint action, justice is superior to injustice. This must be granted, but there is still another question: Is what is superior from the point of joint action or of action *simply* superior? Justice might be superior to injustice from the point of view or action generally, or of joint action particularly, but it still might be inferior because we do not know whether action is the highest. Thus the question must be raised again.

¹ Deleted "he."

² Changed from "he gets the feeling that you need some harming out of his system against Socrates."

³ Deleted "Socrates."

⁴ Deleted "however."

⁵ Deleted "unnecessary."

⁶ Deleted "*Ethics*; rather the."

⁷ Deleted "with regard to."

Session 4: April 4, 1957

Leo Strauss: Let us review briefly what we learned last time. The characteristic feature of Thrasymachus's position is that he denies the existence of an architectonic art, an art which controls all other arts. It would have been natural for him to admit such an art because his own art, rhetoric, could at first glance lay claim to such a position. You may find an example of that in Plato's *Gorgias*. The rhetoricians there present their art as the highest and most noble art.ⁱ Instead of this, Thrasymachus asserts the self-sufficiency of every art. This means the perfect equality of all arts; he asserts a perfect democracy of all the arts. The result of this denial is that the only all-pervasive art, the only bond among the arts, is the art of moneymaking. Every art is accompanied by that, as you can easily see. Whether one considers the shoemaker, the painter, or the teacher, there is always an element of payment involved. Thus, while having a specific art, one must possess the art of money making to some extent. The arts proper, the specific arts as distinguished from the moneymaking arts, are only one thing. The result of Thrasymachus's denial of a ruling or architectonic art, then, is that the only all-pervasive art is the art of moneymaking. Moreover, the self-sufficiency of every art implies that every art is infallible; it necessarily does always the proper thing. The shoemaker as shoemaker is always perfect. I think this is the meaning of the section which we did not discuss sufficiently last time (349c to 350c), where Socrates proves the similarity of the artisan and the just man.

The arts as arts being infallible do always the proper thing, and thus they are just. Where can we find injustice, then? We can find it only in the "art" which accompanies all arts: the art of moneymaking. The shoemaker as shoemaker makes good shoes, but when he sells them he may overcharge the customer. The art of moneymaking or the art of exchange of finished products is the only locus for injustice. Now Thrasymachus is anxious to preserve the possibility of getting more. We may say the thesis underlying Thrasymachus's statements in the first book is a consequence of two different motivations: (a) a general respect for art; (b) his concern with having more, this injustice. These two things characterize him. Since the arts as arts are just, there is no need for a ruling art. Furthermore, there ought not to be a ruling art, because if there were such a ruling art there might not be place for the idea of getting more, or of injustice. The unjust quality of the arts is a consequence of his concern with the autonomy of having more, of the art of making money. If the hierarchic order of the arts were recognized, the all-pervasive art, moneymaking, could not be the architectonic art. The art of moneymaking can be the bond among the arts only if there is no such controlling or architectonic art. If there would be such an architectonic art, the moneymaking art would be controlled by this art. But Thrasymachus has no sense for hierarchic order. The place of order is taken in his thought by law. Mere law as mere decree has its root in the desire to have more as Thrasymachus explains. We can draw this conclusion: there can be no justice if there is no order of the arts. The crucial condition of justice is not law, because law may be unjust in itself and thus outside the bounds of justice. The crucial condition of justice is the order of the arts.

How can we understand this? Let us start again from the provisional definition of justice as a constant and perpetual will to assign to everyone what is his. The difficulty in this definition is

ⁱ Plato *Gorgias* 447c1-456c7.

that *what is his* may not be just. What belongs to a man is defined by positive law. The positive law may be unjust or foolish. It becomes necessary, and this is the hidden argument of the whole *Republic*, to transcend the positive law and go to a higher level where what is each man's is assigned to him not by positive law but by reason or a rational art. Take the example of medicine. Medicine would assign to the body what is good for it in each case with a view to the preservation of health and life. But the considerations underlying medicine are too narrow; there are higher considerations than health and life. Medicine itself must be kept in its place. By whom or by which art must medicine be kept in place? The Platonic argument is that this must be done by the highest art whatever that may be. One might say the medicine of the soul.

Let me repeat: there can be no justice if there is no order of the arts and if the desire to have more is not rendered completely impotent. As we saw last time, it is clear that even if we grant that the artist as artist does nothing but the right and proper thing, still we must remember that he is at the same time a human being. His behavior in selling his product may not be the right and proper thing. He may deceive at this stage, because then it is no longer the art but instead is now moneymaking. The desire to have more must thus be rendered impotent in addition to a proper ordering of the arts. But what is the desire for having more? It implies a desire for having the good things for the self; it brings in selfishness and an indifference to the good of the other people. The man who wants to have more is fundamentally the man who wants to have the good things for himself. Very strangely, Socrates in his conversation with Glaucon, an interlude in the Thrasymachus section, admits the claim of selfishness. He says one cannot expect of men that they should bother about other human beings if they are not somehow rewarded for it.ⁱⁱ This means it is not in itself good. Socrates admits that the tension existing in Thrasymachus's mind between the arts and the desire to have more is a legitimate tension. It must be satisfied, and this can be said to be the problem of the *Republic*. The solution may generally be said to be this: the most intelligent desire to have more finds its satisfaction in the ruling art. In the ruling art, you have both an order of the arts and a full coincidence of selfishness and devotion to the art. This I can say emerges from the first book of the *Republic* as the problem of justice. There must be an ordering and a recognition of this fundamental selfishness. There must be a point where this selfishness transforms, rather transcends itself necessarily, but we will come to that later. Now let us turn to today's report.ⁱⁱⁱ

Student: I said that in citing two fundamental principles—that the several natures of man are different and that each nature must practice a different art—following the oath to Zeus, he was attempting to point out the importance of these two principles.^{iv}

LS: But what was the common notion of the origin of the cities? Consider the book *The Ancient City*; this is perhaps the most important modern book on the historical presuppositions of classical political philosophy.^v The point made there is that according to the general understanding the city, the *polis*, was essentially a religious institution. I do not say this is what Plato and Aristotle thought about it, but the common understanding was of such a character. Our

ⁱⁱ *Republic* 346e3-347d8.

ⁱⁱⁱ The student's paper was read. The reading was not recorded.

^{iv} *Republic* 370a7-c5.

^v Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome*, originally published in 1864. See Strauss, *City and Man*, 240-241.

distinction between city and church would be irrelevant; the city was a church, and the city was thought to have been founded by gods or children of gods. The origin of the city may be found in the gods, and Socrates reminds us of this by the oath here. What is the Socratic assertion about the origin of the city? He uses one expression here.

Same Student: It arises from the needs—^{vi}

LS: Our needs! He says fundamentally the same thing as Aristotle says in the *Politics*. The city is natural, and it has its origin in natural necessity rather than in any arbitrary act on the part of the gods.^{vii} This leaves open the question whether nature itself may not be traced to divine action, but this is another matter. Within these limits, it is sufficient to say the city is natural. Let me come back to another point. You spoke of a state of nature. Does Socrates or Glaucon say this was the state of nature?

Same Student: I think it is implied in the whole statement of the desirability of injustice or the naturalness of injustice and the coming together of men by contract.^{viii}

LS: The *polis* or civil society isⁱ [conventional]. This means that the condition prior to civil society is natural. You can say that, but then we must make clear immediately the difference between what Glaucon speaks of and the state of nature as it was later used. Who introduced the specific term state of nature into political doctrine? I think it was Hobbes.^{ix} What does that state of nature mean in Hobbes?

Same Student: There it is a state of war with each man against each man.

LS: What about here? Everyone is concerned with getting more. This certainly means war. In order to avoid that state of war they make the compact. This is the same as in Hobbes.

Same Student: Although here he speaks of injustice as being natural. Hobbes wouldn't even speak of that.

LS: Whether this does justice to what Glaucon means in this passage is another question. Let us say it is a desire to have all good things for one's self, and let us leave it open whether this is unjust. Glaucon imputes to what you call the state of nature notions which stem from civil society. He is not consistent at this point. What is the difference between Hobbes-Locke-Rousseau and Glaucon? Essentially the state of nature is a state of conflict. People get out of it because of its inconvenience. Does Hobbes have any longing for the state of nature? The state of nature is a bad state for him. What about Glaucon? For whom is the state of nature bad, and for whom is this state good?

Same Student: He seems to imply that it's bad for everyone. The strong have the advantage, of course.

^{vi} Plato *Republic* 369b5-c10.

^{vii} Aristotle *Politics* 1252a24-1253a31.

^{viii} Plato *Republic* 358e3-359b5.

^{ix} Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, chapter 1; *Leviathan*, chapter 13.

LS: This may not be so. Who made the compact? All men, as in Hobbes? The *weak* have made it, and of course the strong must adapt themselves to the situation. What I would like you to see here is that when Glaucon or any other of these people speaks of the natural, he means the good or the healthy. The conventional is derivative and thus much less respectable; it may be necessary but it has a much lesser dignity. For Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau the natural is only the starting point, and everything higher emerges out of a reaction against nature. I think this is a crucial difference. The state of nature in later thought signifies the poor and terrible beginnings. They are not exactly terrible in Rousseau, but they are poor. All humanity arises by virtue of the fact that mankind leaves the state of nature. The conventional is then higher than the natural in this later thought, but that is not so here. It is thus dangerous to use the term state of nature. It has certain implications which are wholly alien to the doctrine as presented by Glaucon or any other great thinker. Let us turn to several other points in the report.

You said there is no perfect injustice according to Glaucon, and you linked that up with a certain argument in the first book. Is it correct to say there is no perfect injustice?

Same Student: He speaks of a perfect injustice which seemingly combines with it the qualities of justice.^x

LS: “Seemingly” is important here. This means that it is thoroughly unjust and pays only lip service to justice.

Same Student: But his actions must also be just.

LS: Externally. This shows the complexity of the problem, but we will come to that particular point later. I think one must note what Glaucon says here: “Perfect injustice is only possible if the *polis* exists.” How can you exploit other people in a state of nature? Everyone can easily kill you while you sleep. You need at least a bodyguard in order to be perfectly unjust, but there are no bodyguards in the state of nature. The difficulty which you indicate is a real one. Perfect injustice requires the *polis*, but it is perfect injustice. The mere external fact that Glaucon speaks of the perfectly unjust man must in no circumstances be minimized.

The last point has to do with your comment in reference to the Socratic statement that he will seek justice in the city because there it is written large.^{xi} You state this is ironical. I believe this too, but if you say it is ironical you must state the nonironical meaning of that statement as well. Why does Socrates turn to the *polis* in attempting to understand justice rather than look at the individual?

Same Student: He can do it very easily on the basis of the arts, the formation of the city, as entailing the principle of justice in its very elements.

LS: Can one not state this much more simply? What is the difference between justice and the other virtues? How might it be distinguished for example from temperance? Justice is primarily

^x Plato *Republic* 360e1-361b5, 362a3-c8.

^{xi} *Republic* 368c7-369b1.

the social virtue. You call a man just primarily with a view to the fact of how he behaves toward other human beings. Temperance does not imply a relation to other human beings. You cannot possibly elaborate the meaning of justice without analyzing society. Let us turn to a discussion of today's text.

You mention several times quite rightly that Glaucon is responsible for the fact that the discussion continues after the Thrasymachus section and later on.^{xii} After this first simple city had been finished, everyone was pleased, and they could have stopped there except for Glaucon's intervention.^{xiii} Glaucon is responsible for the *Republic* as a whole. May I also remind you of the very beginning of the dialogue? What happened there? Why did this conversation take place? When Polemarchus tried to use this tough technique, we saw that Glaucon gave in immediately.^{xiv} It was obviously not because he was afraid, because he was a very courageous man as we have seen. He liked this sort of discussion. Glaucon is thus the father of this whole dialogue, and this is very important. We can state this much more specifically, perhaps, with a view to the beginning of the second book. Socrates says, "After having said this I thought I had gotten rid of the speech or the argument." Socrates was frankly relieved at the end of the first book. Then Glaucon compels Socrates to go on.^{xv} We can thus say with a view also to the very beginning of the dialogue that the *Republic* is a compulsory dialogue. Among the other distinctions among the dialogues one must also distinguish between spontaneous or voluntary dialogues and compulsory ones. There are dialogues in which Socrates, after having come back from a battle, *rushes* to a certain wrestling place in order to talk to these young people.^{xvi} This is a spontaneous dialogue. On the other hand, you find the *Apology*, which according to Socrates himself is a dialogue with the Athenian people, which was very compulsory.^{xvii} The law commanded that a person accused of such crimes as Socrates was had to defend himself.^{xviii} There are all kinds of dialogues in between, but the *Republic* is clearly indicated to be a compulsory dialogue. Compulsion plays a very great role here. Do those of you who have read the entire *Republic* recall where compulsion plays a significant role in connection with the problem of justice?

Student: The myth of the cave.^{xix}

LS: Also the fact that the people outside the cave are compelled to go down, just as those inside are compelled to begin their education.^{xx} Justice has something to do with compulsion. We all know that, although we interpret it differently because of the fundamentally different biblical understanding of justice. When we use the words duty, duty-bound, obligation, and so on, we indicate this compulsory character. For Plato and Aristotle² [the] highest things are beyond duty; they do not have this strictly compulsory character. They are things toward which we naturally

^{xii} 357a1-358d6.

^{xiii} 372c2-e1.

^{xiv} 327b2-328b3.

^{xv} 357a1-358d6, 367e6-368c7.

^{xvi} *Charmides* 153a1-d5.

^{xvii} *Apology of Socrates* 37a2-b2. See also 39e1-5 and *Gorgias* 455a2-6.

^{xviii} 18e5-19a7.

^{xix} *Republic* 514a1-521b11.

^{xx} 519c8-521b11, 515c4-516a3.

tend.

The other point which appears right at the beginning of the second book is that Glaucon is most courageous, most manly.^{xxi} Glaucon is the chief character of the *Republic*, although this must be qualified immediately. There is another chief character from book 2 on: Adeimantus. His brother Adeimantus is not characterized by courage. This doesn't mean that he is a coward. As we shall see later, he is characterized by moderation. This combination of courage and moderation, not justice, is the theme of morality for Plato in the first place. In several other dialogues, the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato makes use of the same distinction. In both he talks to a young mathematician, but the young mathematician of the *Sophist* is moderate; the young mathematician of the *Statesman* is courageous. The theme revealed in the *Statesman* is that the whole political problem consists in the mating of the courageous and the moderate. It finds its simple empirical, although sometimes deceptive, equivalent in the fact that the simple mating of the two sexes is basic to society, and the fact that the common opinion has it that courage is characteristic of man and moderation or temperance characteristic of woman.^{xxii} Here this is presented in the mating of Glaucon and Adeimantus. They are *really* imperfect human beings.

Now we come to Glaucon's speech, and Glaucon states it with very great force and beauty. Glaucon is legitimately dissatisfied with the atrocious argument of the first book. He wants now to have a serious argument against the defenders of injustice. He is not only dissatisfied with the fact that Thrasymachus gave in so easily but with Thrasymachus's own statement of the problem or the position. He will do this more adequately. What is the thesis of Glaucon? According to the common opinion, justice is a burden and a nuisance. It is something necessary, but necessary means not desirable for its own sake. According to the common opinion, justice has the status of bitter medicine. You need it, but at the same time you hate it. It is not chosen for its own sake but only with a view to its consequences. Gymnastics or sailing are in themselves according to Plato most unpleasant activities, yet we choose them because we know we cannot get the desirable things that follow from them without undergoing these punishments. By itself, injustice is preferable. This is what all people act upon according to Glaucon; sometimes they even say it. Thus there is nothing paradoxical in Thrasymachus's assertion.

Glaucon desires that justice be set forth as choiceworthy in itself, wholly independent of its consequences. Glaucon assigns to Socrates the task of praising justice as it has never been praised before, for no one has ever said before that justice is to be chosen for its own sake. In order to induce Socrates to praise justice, he must blame justice or praise injustice.^{xxiii} That means he will present the thesis of Thrasymachus in a clearer way. What is that thesis? By nature, doing injustice is good. But this is inconvenient for the weak. Thus they make a compact not to harm and not to be harmed.^{xxiv} It is somewhat misleading to speak as the translator does of a social compact. There is no reference to the foundation of society as we have generally known it; it means merely a compact in the strict and limited sense by which it is agreed not to harm and not to be harmed. There is nothing said about living together coming into being by virtue of the

^{xxi} 357a2-4.

^{xxii} See *Statesman* 308d1-311c8. See also Leo Strauss, "Plato," in *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, 1987), 76-77.

^{xxiii} *Republic* 357a1-358d6.

^{xxiv} 358e3-359b5.

compact. This may be, but there is no reference to it at this point.

Student: Is it implied that only the weak make this compact?

LS: That is not only implied; you yourself quoted the passage in which it is made clear that it would be sheer madness for the strong man.

Same Student: But the same passage makes it clear that all men have experience at both doing and suffering injustice, and all men find that the evil of suffering injustice is greater.

LS: Not all men but only the weaker.

Same Student: 359a is the location of the relevant quote.

LS: He speaks of men in general here, but he makes it clear what he means later on. In the sequel he indicates that he who is capable of doing that and who is truly a man, he will not make contact with a single other man as to avoiding harming and being harmed. You must be careful here. The position of Glaucon may be untenable, and I believe it is. The question is whether he saw that and whether from his point of view it is not possible to maintain that there are by nature superior men who would be much better off if not subject to the law which the weak impose on themselves and on everyone else.

Glaucon speaks in this passage (page 115) of the coming into being and the being or the essence of justice. At the end of this passage he indicates that this is the nature of justice and that these are the things out of which justice has come by nature into being.^{xxv} Glaucon does not make a distinction in fact between the being of justice—what justice is—and the coming into being of justice. Justice, implies Glaucon, is essentially derivative from something else. Thus you cannot understand it by itself, but you must also see its genesis. I think you should note that the question of what justice is is not raised by Glaucon. It is assumed that everyone knows it. Then he says that by nature man desires to commit injustice. What does this mean? He speaks about justice and injustice before he clarifies what he means by that. The meaning of justice is only implicitly clarified in Glaucon's speech. One might say that by nature men seek to harm other men, since it would not be precise to say, as Glaucon does, that men by nature seek to be unjust. Harm is used here in the non-moral sense, although it is difficult to think of it in such a sense. By nature men seek to take away or to deprive others of the good things which they have, e.g., life, liberty, and so on. This is what he means here. Up to this point it has simply been asserted that by nature everyone seeks to get the most and that concern for others is due entirely to compulsion by society. This is an assertion. Glaucon has to prove it. How does he prove it? Man does not by nature desire to respect the rights of others. Man does not have a natural concern for others. He proves it by fiction, and he admits this.^{xxvi} Whether the fiction is so inadequate as you seem to contend is a good question.

Let me make one further point before we go anyplace. There is one crucial difference between Thrasymachus's statement of the position and Glaucon's statement. I would like to say that this

^{xxv} 359a4-b5.

^{xxvi} 359b6-360d7.

distinguishes Glaucon's statement from the similar statement found in the *Gorgias*.^{xxvii} Up to now, it has been pointed out that by nature there is no justice; by nature everyone seeks his own good and is in no way concerned with the good of others. This is the common position of many people. What is the characteristic feature of Glaucon's position, and what makes it in a way the most interesting? We have come across the same problem when we discussed the Thrasymachus section. What is Glaucon's innovation? What is the characteristic thesis of Glaucon regarding the problem of justice and injustice? This ring of Gyges, what does this mean? What is the virtue of the ring of Gyges?

Student: It indicates that under certain conditions the actions of all men will be the same.

LS: But what is the virtue of the ring of Gyges? Invisibility. What Glaucon says is that the problem of justice cannot be understood if we do not take into consideration the difference between visibility and invisibility. Neither Thrasymachus nor Callicles indicated this; this is Glaucon's contribution. How does it come out? This starts from an analysis, and while this is not developed here, we must and can recover it by going beyond the pages of Plato.

If you take a virtue like temperance, is the difference between visibility and invisibility of any consequence? If you drink a bottle of whiskey at home and have certain unpleasant consequences as a result, and then you do the same in a restaurant, what is the difference between these two situations? In the one there may be disgrace, in the other there may be no disgrace. But temperance as temperance is not concerned with disgrace as disgrace. It is concerned with the proper constitution of the whole body. In the case of certain virtues it does not make the slightest difference whether you commit the actions of that virtue or its opposite in private or in public. But in the case of actions of justice it is different. If someone cheats and is never caught, this makes a great difference. In the one case punishment will follow and in the other case punishment will not follow. There are virtues which carry their reward or punishment with themselves. In the case of justice, that is not as obvious. Thus the phenomenon of visibility or invisibility, or public or private, is of great importance.

This is what Glaucon and no one else brings out. We can also say instead of visibility or invisibility the word concealment. The phenomenon of non-concealment and concealment is crucial as far as justice is concerned. From this we can understand Glaucon's analysis of the perfectly unjust man, and thus indirectly of justice as a whole. What is by nature best according to Glaucon? To have more than everyone else. But what empirical phenomenon corresponds to this desire to have more? Who has effectively more than everyone else on the crude and superficial but important level? Obviously, the tyrant. He is the biggest noise in the community and can do anything he wants to do. There are no press conferences which can point out that he drives too fast. Everyone is compelled to admire him, to say nothing of the other benefits available to him. Look at this tyrant. This tyrant would be utterly impossible in the state of nature, [where] there are no bodyguards. The greatest good requires the *polis*; the highest good is unobtainable outside of society. That means the highest good³ or the greatest injustice requires the broad lawabidingness of the mass of people. No tyrant could exist otherwise. The highest good consists in the silent exploitation of the *polis* for one's own purposes. The highest injustice is the most perfect act⁴ [of] deception or cheating. It can only exist in cheating and in deception

^{xxvii} See *Gorgias* 482c4-484c3.

and not by mere force. This shows that Thrasymachus himself is a very imperfect man, because he tells the story of injustice. No tyrant would do this. The real enemies of mankind are those who under the pretence of justice do what they want to do. Cleon, who in Thucydides talks more of justice than perhaps anyone else, is much more terrible than an “intellectual” like Thrasymachus.^{xxviii} Let me repeat: the essence of injustice consists in deception.

It is in this context that Glaucon tells the story of Gyges. This story is older and occurs in the first book of Herodotus.^{xxix} The interesting thing is that Glaucon changes it. Whenever we retell a story and wittingly or unwittingly change it, especially unwittingly, we reveal our character. You have learned this from modern psychology, but apart from this it is even true. What is the story of Gyges in Herodotus? Gyges is compelled by his master to see his master's beautiful wife naked. The king is enamored of his beautiful wife, but it is not sufficient simply that he think so; this opinion must be shared by others. When someone is proud of something, he must have confirmation of that. He checks on this by asking his servant Gyges secretly to watch when she undresses. Gyges does not want to do it. He feels that it has been found out from olden times that everyone should see only his own beautiful things. His master compels him to do it. His wife notices it and is outraged. She compels him to kill her husband as a punishment for this thing and to marry her. They live happily ever after. This Gyges of Herodotus is not an unjust man; he refuses to do this atrocious thing and does it only under compulsion. What Herodotus means by this story goes somewhat deeper and it has certain application to Herodotus himself. What does Herodotus do in the course of preparing his immortal book? He travels and observes the customs and laws of all nations. What does it mean to study the laws of different nations? He looks at the beautiful and noble things of others. He transgresses this most fundamental of all laws: that one should view only the beautiful or noble or moral principles accepted by one's own community. He really does voluntarily what Gyges is compelled to do. What Herodotus has in mind is that there is a conflict between knowledge and morality in its primary sense. By this we mean acceptance of the mores of the community. How does it come that Herodotus not get into trouble as Gyges does? Herodotus has a certain invisibility by the way he writes.

To come back to the *Republic*. Later on in the *Republic*, a certain institution called the noble lie will be mentioned.^{xxx} What does this mean? The noble lie is the result of the fact that it is a command of justice, of duty, to say the untruth. As we shall see when we come to that story of the noble lie, it is a fundamental lie or untruth. If you are shocked by the word lie, then you may say untruth. The word is the same in Greek, but we are more delicate and perhaps do not like the word. If it is a duty to say the untruth, then there must be a tension between justice and knowledge. It is for this reason that right at the beginning of the dialogue, the Cephalus section, when Cephalus has said truth-telling is a part of “justice,” Socrates in restating it does not say truth-telling, but simply truth.^{xxxi} Is justice identical with truth, or not? The implicit answer is no, because in some cases, e.g., the madman, we are of course entitled to lie. This is a problem.

^{xxviii} Cleon, the leading political figure in Athens after Pericles, is described by Thucydides as the “most violent of the citizens” (3.36.6). Strauss apparently refers here to Cleon's argument that it is just to destroy the entire city of Mytilene, at 3.36-50.

^{xxix} Herodotus 1.8-15.

^{xxx} Plato *Republic* 414b8-415c7.

^{xxxi} 331a10-d3.

By making Glaucon tell the story of Gyges here, Plato reminds of this problem. This fundamental problem goes through the whole dialogue. Glaucon himself is only an instrument of Plato. He does not know what the Gyges story means; he is unaware of these implications. What is Glaucon's conscious and deliberate meaning in telling this story? He is concerned with the genuine character of justice; moreover, with justice practiced for its own sake, whether others know it or not. Thus he introduces the story of a ring (which is not in Herodotus) which makes one invisible. What Glaucon wants to say is that if the just man had such a ring, which by turning inside (this is also of some importance) makes a man invisible, then the just man would do exactly the same things the unjust man would do. Only visibility, i.e., the awareness of disgrace and other consequences, prevents him from doing these things. Glaucon's argument is this: if justice is intrinsically good and injustice intrinsically bad, then justice leading to the greatest sufferings including punishment for alleged injustice is preferable to injustice leading to the greatest rewards including the reputation for outstanding justice. This is Glaucon's first concern. He really loves justice, but he is also bewildered, and bewildered precisely because he is an honest man. Is he, Glaucon, truly just? Is he just for the sake of justice or for the sake of the rewards for justice? Does he not sometimes desire the forbidden things, and does he not have the awkward feeling that he would do it if he were not afraid of disgrace? This problem finds its expression in this fiction of the man who could make himself invisible at any time.

Then Glaucon says that he could not swear for himself what he would do under such circumstances.^{xxxii} This is an act of honesty. Without being aware of the original meaning of the story in Herodotus, he hits upon that meaning by unconsciously changing the story. I mentioned three of the changes: In Herodotus, the hero is Gyges but there is absolutely no mention of the ring; in Glaucon, it is an ancestor of Gyges. Secondly, this ring is found by this ancestor of Gyges in a chasm: the earth opened and a bronze horse was found. In that was a human being of greater than human stature and a ring. Does this remind you of something? A horse of such a nature, a hollow horse? Who was the hero of that? Odysseus, a man of more than human size. Odysseus had these qualities: he was a traveler; he saw the manners and customs of many nations; and he was very wily. Without being aware of it, Glaucon hits on this other meaning.

Glaucon has thus made this point very forcefully. Here I cannot agree with today's report that this is a fictitious instance. Why could not a man of perfect justice, precisely because he is so honest, appear or be made to appear as the greatest crook?^{xxxiii} I regard this as perfectly possible. I think you have too favorable a notion of human justice.

Student: I think that in any measure of justice the actions of the just man cannot be overlooked.

LS: But these actions can easily be construed as *proving* his crookedness. Take justice in the case of a clever crook. You have a front of perfect honesty, and this front will rightly be used as the proof of the greatness of this crookedness. There are cases in the world in which that took place. Even in the daily papers you find reports of people who did not commit grave crimes and yet were punished.

Same Student: There are a number of isolated cases and a number of isolated instances in

^{xxxii} 360b3-d7.

^{xxxiii} 360e1-362c8.

particular cases, but as far all presenting the whole life of the man completely misconstrued—

LS: There is a certain difficulty here, but if you put the question in very severe moral terms you could say this. You could take a kind of commonsensical view that if you take the life of a man as a whole, his deeds and his speeches—^{xxxiv}—This is a kind of plausible view on which we all act and must act, but if you take an extreme moralistic view and say all these speeches and deeds are nothing compared with the intention— did he do all of these things for the sake of righteousness itself or did he do it with a view to his reputation, etc.—the line Kant and others took, then it is perfectly possible to reach this conclusion. I think this shows the amazing radicalism of Plato that he thinks these thoughts which were generally not thought by Greek thinkers. He was aware of that.

Same Student: But the entire discussion by Glaucon here centers on the idea that a facade exists behind which there is no real substance; the relation between the surface appearance and the underlying intention.

LS: But precisely in the case of justice, which you might translate as righteousness, this is somehow different. This is true of some of the other virtues as Socrates points out in another dialogue.^{xxxv} Some people are courageous on the basis of cowardice. They may be cowards regarding what other people will say about them. It may not be a genuine courage but a courage induced by other factors. This is the case of justice particularly. I think there is nothing exaggerated in this example. Looking toward a future discussion in the *Republic*, and for that matter a suggestion in book 1, we see that Plato disregards moral purpose. The obvious difference in the earlier discussion between the honest guard-thief is the purpose; the art is the same.^{xxxvi} Here Plato brings this problem into the open. Here the difference is *entirely* moral purpose and not at all anything like art. From the point of view of moral purpose, you cannot reach any other statement than this. Here Plato really approaches the problem. Plato will not admit it, as we have seen at the beginning. He is saddled with the task of finding a substitute for moral purpose in knowledge. As for the differences regarding knowledge, especially this kind of knowledge of which Plato thinks, deception is impossible. Someone can make himself dumber than he is, but no one can make himself brighter than he is. Here deception in the positive sense is impossible.

Student: With regard to this distinction between truth and truth-telling, would that have any bearing on the status of the dialogue as a whole in that it is a narrative dialogue?

LS: I don't think so. We all take them as works of art rather than historical accounts. But I see what you mean. In a narrative dialogue, the pretense is created that Socrates told this story; the pretense of historicity is raised to a degree that it is not raised in a performed dialogue. Up to this point you are right, but I would not dare to go beyond that. That is true, and I think you would see it even more clearly if you would read Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, meant as an apology for Socrates. Xenophon was thus to give a factual account of what Socrates did and said, and then he introduces the stories by saying "and I was also present when he had this conversation." No one

^{xxxiv} There was a change of tape at this point.

^{xxxv} Possibly a reference to *Phaedo* 68d2-13.

^{xxxvi} *Republic* 333e3-334a9.

today believes that these are narratives. They are mere fictions. It is also true of the *Republic*, although to a lesser degree, we might say. How would one have to state this problem on which you are touching with the necessary generality? All of Plato's dialogues are pieces of fiction and untrue. Not only have these dialogues never taken place as they are described, but there is something even deeper. All of the dialogues are based on a fundamental untruth: that there is no chance. The dialogues would not be a perfect work of art if there were any feature, e.g., someone scratching his head, which didn't have a meaning. The Platonic dialogue as a whole is based on the fundamental fiction that there is no chance. This is a very fundamental untruth. But let us return to the context.

Glaucon has stated the case very forcefully and partly on the basis of self-inspection: What would I do under these and these circumstances? But there is one obvious defect. The man is made invisible by the ring so that he can get away with everything, but there is one great difficulty. I am speaking now of difficulties in Glaucon's argument as he would see them to some extent. Are there no all-seeing gods? He must meet this issue if it is not to be untenable. If there are all-seeing gods concerned with justice, he cannot get away with the ring of Gyges. What does he say? Very significantly he ends this speech with a reference to the problem (page 127, 362c). What he says is very simple: if there are gods, they can be bribed. There is no problem. He raises the problem and answers it. The whole plausibility of the sketch rests on the idea that the gods either do not exist or are not just. How does he know that? Does he say something about that? The subject of the gods is not sufficiently treated by Glaucon, and this alone is the reason for Adeimantus coming in with another speech.

Adeimantus proceeds in a different way.^{xxxvii} He attacks the usual praise of justice. All the usual praises praise justice with a view to its rewards, especially rewards from the gods. Adeimantus says at the beginning that Glaucon had not yet spoken of the most important thing. We know this is an important clue to Adeimantus's speech. Why is what Adeimantus brings up the most important thing? The common or universal opinion is a matter of the greatest weight. *No one* says that justice is to be chosen for its own sake; thus the position of Socrates, who praises justice for its own sake, is paradoxical. But Adeimantus puts a greater emphasis on the praise of justice by private men and poets. They all say justice is something noble but painful. Here we reach the really radical formulation of the problem which Glaucon did not give. Everyone says, the poets in particular, that if justice is noble but painful, injustice is base but pleasant. One further step: what is by nature good is the pleasant. The pleasure deriving from being regarded as noble is entirely due to convention. This is the radical formulation of the position. The position which Socrates attacks says the good is identical with the pleasant. There are things which are naturally conducive to pleasure, although in themselves painful, e.g., gymnastics. They are useful because they serve pleasure. There are other things which have no necessary connection with pleasure. They are merely conventional. The full meaning of the opposition argument comes out clearly in the Adeimantus section. There are certain points in this section to which I would like to draw your attention.

At 366c (page 141), after saying how powerful common opinion is in favor of injustice, he mentions the possibility of finding a man who regards justice as best, although such men would be extremely rare. But these men will not be punitive because they know how very difficult it is

^{xxxvii} 362d1-367e5.

to see it. They will have pity for those who are unjust and they will not be angry with them. Two sources of genuine justice are indicated here: divine nature or knowledge. He makes a fine distinction. Those who are by divine nature immune to the desire for injustice feel a disgust at doing injustice; those who have acquired a knowledge do not feel a disgust but merely abstain from it. How important this is for the later argument I do not know yet, but I think this is a remarkable distinction.

In the sequel, 366e (page 141), he says that true justice requires that it be invisible to the gods as well as to man. Then one could never tell whether it was not fear of punishment or desire for reward which induced a man to be just. Another passage, 367c (page 142), finds him desiring to state the problem to Socrates again: In order to prove that justice is choiceworthy for its own sake, the just man must be presented as deprived of any reward of any nature whatever. The unjust man must be deprived of any punishment, including disgrace or bad reputation. The just man must then appear as very unjust and the unjust man as very just. In the closing passage, he makes a reference to Thrasymachus, the only reference to Thrasymachus in the Adeimantus speech:

“Unless you take away from either the true repute and attach to each the false, we shall say it is not justice that you are praising but the sentiment, nor injustice that you censure but the seeming, and that you really are exhorting us to be unjust though you attempt to conceal it; we shall think you are at one with Thrasymachus in thinking that justice is the other man’s good and the advantage of the stronger, and that injustice is advantageous and profitable to the self, although disadvantageous to the inferior.”

Did Thrasymachus say disadvantageous to the inferior, or the weaker? Did he say that injustice was disadvantageous to the weaker? He says here that justice is advantageous to the weaker, whereas Thrasymachus had said that justice is the advantage of the stronger. How can this be reconciled? Here he says that the unjust thing is useful to the man himself but disadvantageous to the inferior.

Student: Doesn’t he point to the premise that all men seek injustice? The advantage of all men is to take advantage of others.

LS: I think that is presupposed, but I do not think that is relevant to our present difficulty. This reminds me of a passage in the *Gorgias*: “The many weak are the strong.”^{xxxviii} I mention this with a specific thought in mind. This is the democratic implication of Thrasymachus’s doctrine and might be a link to that democracy of the arts we discussed last time.

Let me introduce one further point in the same passage. When Adeimantus enumerates the things which are by nature attractive for their own sake, he mentions seeing, hearing, thinking and being healthy. This is in reference to what Glaucon had said on the same subject in 357c, but there is one nice difference: Adeimantus adds hearing. Of what significance is this?

Student: To hear conversation or speech.

^{xxxviii} Apparently a reference to *Gorgias* 488d1-e5.

LS: I think there is a kind of listening which is somewhat more emphatic or intense. I suggest music. Adeimantus is a musical man. You see another sign of his character in the sequel (page 145), when he says that he could not accept such a thing unless Socrates were to command it.^{xxxix} He has a certain vanity; a characteristic not present in Glaucon.

Glaucon and Adeimantus have now stated the case against justice as powerfully as they could. The root of the argument comes out in the Adeimantus section: by nature, the good is only the pleasant, and the pleasant means necessarily the pleasure which I feel insofar as something affects me. There is no reference to other human beings. It implies a primacy of the bodily pleasures. This is the position against which the whole Socratic argument is directed. The thought that the good is identical with the pleasant, or its opposite, was the moral issue of classical antiquity. You can see in reading Cicero that this is still *the* issue.^{xi} Is the good identical with the pleasant, or different from the pleasant? In modern times this has been changed for a number of reasons.

This proof is the task that Socrates has been compelled to undertake. He must prove that justice is choiceworthy for its own sake. Socrates begins this proof by an investigation of the polis. He argues one must do this because justice is more readily seen there; justice is written in larger letters.^{xli} But this is not the decisive reason. The decisive reason is that justice is essentially social or political and one must study it in the polis. Whether the very fact that justice is a social or political virtue does not imply visibility so that the test of Glaucon is not applicable is another matter. In approaching this they look at a city coming into being. Why do they not look at a city completed?

Student: Glaucon raised this method earlier.

LS: In order to meet Glaucon, who has given an account of justice in terms of the genesis of justice, on his own grounds, Socrates has to answer that by giving his account of the genesis.^{xlii} This is true, but there is an even more obvious reason. Perhaps no city of which they knew was just. Thus they would be unable to look at any existing city to see justice written in larger letters. The origin of the city is traced to a selfish desire, 369b to c, a selfish desire of beings who are not self-sufficient. The crude weakness of Thrasymachus's argument is that he overlooks the need or the want implied in man's nature. Man necessarily needs other men.

Student: I didn't quite understand your last point about the origins. Does this mean that if you don't find what you desire to study immediately available for your observation, then the only way that you can understand the thing is to ascertain its origin?

LS: The answer from this point of view is that you have to find the subject of your interest if you are to look at it. If none is in existence and you have to look at it, what do you do? You make a model. The important point here, however, is that mutuality is of the essence of man. Thus this crude and primitive selfishness which Thrasymachus had in mind is simply impossible. There is

^{xxxix} 367d8.

^{xi} Possibly a reference to the first two books of Cicero *De finibus*.

^{xli} Plato *Republic* 368d1-369a8.

^{xlii} 359a4-b5.

a further point, 370a to b (page 151), important to the understanding here. The question arises as to what are our basic wants. Food, housing, clothing, and so on are obvious. Now this further passage: "Shall each of these artisans contribute his work to the common use of all? —Shall the farmer, who is one, provide food for four and put four full times the toil in the production of food, and share it with the others; or shall he give no thought to them and provide a fourth portion of the food for himself alone in a quarter of the time, and employ the other three quarters in providing a house, garments and shoes—"

Adeimantus indicates that perhaps the former way is easier, but this is simply a wrong translation here. What it says is that "perhaps the latter way is the easier." I will explain this because it is an absolutely crucial issue that is raised here. The question is something like this. It was originally established that we would have one man, one job. Each one should have the job for which he is by nature fitted.

Now the situation becomes a bit more complicated. There will be not only four but eight different jobs. The question is raised by Socrates at this stage: Should each member of the community be self-sufficient, producing everything he needs, or should there be this so-called division of labor, by which each would produce only one kind of thing—shoes, wheat, or whatever it may be? Adeimantus is inclined to prefer the perfectly self-sufficient man. This means that strictly speaking he questions the need for the polis or society. Socrates ironically agrees with Adeimantus's general assertion. Everyone should do himself for the sake of himself his own things. Coming from Adeimantus this means that each should produce for himself all the things he wants. Adeimantus wants perfect self-sufficiency, but Socrates interprets it to mean that everyone should do himself for the sake of himself his own things, i.e., the things for which he is best fitted. Socrates reasserts the original assertion against Adeimantus's momentary revolt. Adeimantus sees that the Socratic scheme makes self-sufficiency impossible. For the very same reasons Adeimantus is satisfied with the very small city; it permits a maximum of self-sufficiency. He is essentially a moderate man; he is a man who wants to be as self-sufficient as possible and not to be dependent on others. But this cannot be permitted: human nature, through the mouth of Socrates, does not admit it. Thus Socrates says that everyone must follow his natural, one-sided bent; only in this way will the products be good.

He stands here at an opposite pole from Marx; you should be aware of that. I think the anti-Marxist position is nowhere as clearly stated as in these pages.^{xliii} We may come back to this aspect later. The quality of the products will suffer by versatility. Why this interest in the quality of the products? I raise this question because of the idiocy about the value judgments, as if he could not reason about these matters. Is this simply Socrates's private value system that makes him interested in good shoes, good garments, and so on? No! Everyone, that is the indication, has a selfish interest in the quality of the products. We do not go beyond this here. We all want to have good shoes; if someone does not want such things there must be something wrong with them. People may want to torture themselves, or perhaps they want to look more elegant, and so on. In 370e (page 153) Adeimantus is satisfied with a small city; he makes this quite clear. He says we will get a big city if we continue in the present fashion.

^{xliii}Possibly a reference to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1978), 160. See Strauss, *City and Man*, 133.

After these things have been described, the city seems complete. Now where will we find justice? Adeimantus answers that we may find this in some mutual needs of the members, perhaps in the honesty of the exchange which takes place.^{xliv} Note that the last two institutions mentioned before were the shopkeepers and wage earners. Money is involved. The locus of justice would seem to be exchange. But this is only said with a *perhaps*. Perhaps this is a much too narrow notion of justice. Perhaps the justice lies much deeper, in the one man, one job idea, [rather] than in the mere honesty of exchange. Socrates suggests that we look at the whole way of life. They seem to be happy and things go well. The life is characterized by many things, among which is mentioned alone the fact that it is strictly vegetarian. There is no shedding of blood in the city. It is thus particularly funny that Glaucon says it is a city of pigs, because in fact it is a city without pigs.^{xliv} They have cows and oxen for plowing and the like, but they have no pigs. Pigs can only be used for eating. A city without pigs is called a city of pigs. So we have this beautiful city, but suddenly Glaucon interrupts. He is completely dissatisfied; there is [nothing] to eat with the bread. Socrates offers him some candies but that is not good enough; he wants meat. It is obviously a joke here, but we must find the seriousness behind the joke. What is missing in the first city? They are nice people.

Student: Knowledge, philosophy.

LS: We can give a very simple answer to that. When they sit together and enjoy themselves at banquets, they sing praises to the gods. Later on, book 10, 607a, in the completed city we find the only kind of poetry permitted hymns to the gods and praises of the good. Here there are no praises to the virtues, because there are no virtues mentioned. Virtue is lacking; niceness is not virtue. The interesting thing is that this is Socrates's or Plato's opinion about what is lacking but not Glaucon's. Glaucon is a crude man, and he has to be educated. He doesn't get any food for hours and hours. There is an indication of this in 372e (page 161). After the discussion of the new city, the more luxurious city has begun, he says that it may be possible to ascertain the origin of justice and injustice in the state by observing such a city. This means that by observing this simple city we could not hope to ascertain the origin of justice and injustice in the state. Justice proper is not yet there.

We are thus dissatisfied with this simple life; we need more luxuries. As a result, we need more land and thus we must wage war. For this we need an army, but this army must be a professional army if we are not to violate the idea one man, one job. What kind of men do we need as soldiers, guardians, or what have you? They must fulfill two considerations: (a) they must be kind or gentle toward their fellow citizens; (b) they must be harsh against foreigners. That seems to be impossible, but every dog shows that this combination is possible. But then Socrates says that this is something philosophic, to love acquaintances and to hate foreigners.^{xlvi} What is so philosophic about that?

Student: To be able to distinguish the difference between the two.

^{xliv} 371e12-372a4.

^{xliv} 372a5-d5.

^{xlvi} 372e2-376c5.

LS: Let us be more precise. The dog makes his preference or rejection with a view to being known or unknown; his standard is knowledge, and hence it is philosophic. I would assume this is a very ironical statement. What human type is properly compared to the dog? The citizen as mere citizen. Here we find a provisional identification of the citizen with the philosopher which is not, strictly speaking, valid. One further point on page 171, bottom. Here he says the guardians must be spirited, and in addition, a philosopher in respect to his nature. Originally he had said they must be gentle and spirited; now he replaces gentleness by philosophy. He no longer says this combination is philosophy, but this gentleness alone is connected with philosophy. This is taken up later on in 376b to c, where he says in a different way that gentleness requires philosophy, and philosophy takes the place of gentleness. Philosophy, the philosophic mood or however you want to call it, is akin to gentleness and not to the other. The comparison of the dog or the guardian to the philosopher is only a provisional statement, and it conceals a great difficulty. We have seen in reading the *Gorgias* last quarter that philosophy is essentially akin to gentleness. Adeimantus spoke of that earlier. The truly just men are not angry at the unjust.^{xlvi} But without some degree of anger it is impossible to punish. This creates the difficulty. We can state the difficulty also as follows. In the first book it was suggested that the just man does not harm anyone, but the guardians must harm other people.^{xlvi} But this is just one of the difficulties that we must take up later.

¹ Deleted "convention."

² Deleted "these."

³ Deleted "or the highest good."

⁴ Deleted "or."

^{xlvi} 366c3-d3.

^{xlvi} 335b2-e6.

Session 5: April 9, 1957

Leo Strauss: Let me consider one general question. The education of guardians was discussed here in connection with the attempt to find out what justice is. Why is this so? Can you make this a bit clearer? Would *we* think of this subject if we were wondering what justice is? Could you state it in a way so as to be intelligible to anyone who has never read Plato, but who has only the present-day notions of justice?

Student: This really goes back to passages which preceded this particular discussion of education. They are looking for justice as it will exist in the city which they are founding. They have built the city to the stage where they now have to consider guardians, those who will rule the city, care for it, and defend it in time of war. It will be up to these people to see that the city is cared for and that justice is maintained in it.

LS: The important question is whether it is possible to find out what justice is by proceeding in a manner other than the one we consider here. If we have a discussion today about justice and assume that no one has ever read the *Republic*, would we not hit upon exactly the same problem if we are precise and exact enough? Shall I show you how? When we speak about justice today, we understand by the term something like the consideration of the rights of others. It is very simple. We must however make a distinction between what rights are really rights and what rights only pretend to be so. Take as an example the right to work as it is understood in the present controversy. Is this a right or is it not a right? It is generally admitted today that the right to free speech, the right to read and write, are rights. The question necessarily arises, however, whether this right is a real right. Is it perhaps necessary to restrict some reading and writing? This immediately introduces the question of censorship. We must always remember that the issues which Plato raises are not bound up absolutely with his particular scheme of presentation. Consider the discussion of the first city. Here we really discuss the question of anarchism. The first city was a city lacking not only pigs and other meat but also government. In effect Plato is considering the issue of anarchism. Is a society in which there is no government and in which no government is needed good? You can divorce this issue from the vegetarian element and still be confronted by a very serious issue. I am sure that Plato had a very good reason for linking anarchism and vegetarianism, but it is not so obvious and we are entitled to discuss the problem of anarchism—a much more political problem than vegetarianism—on its own terms.

Student: I was under the impression that Socrates was somewhat satisfied with the first city as he had outlined it and only reluctantly agreed to add these additional luxuries.

LS: That is true to a certain extent, but he was not quite satisfied with it; it lacked the most important thing. There is no virtue or true justice there, although it is obvious that these people are very nice.

Same Student: I see. Justice becomes necessary as the city becomes more complicated.

LS: Virtue requires the presence of evil, then.

Student: How can we say there is no virtue in this city of pigs? Taking the standards of later books, it might be said that the people in this city mind their own business completely. Perfect justice would then prevail.

LS: Then we would have to inquire whether there are certain kinds of businesses which are not minded at all here. Would that be justice? This is a problem, but I think the evidence is rather overwhelming. As they turn to the construction of the second city, Socrates says: "Let us discuss it so that we see the coming into being of justice and injustice."ⁱ This implies we could not have seen it in the first instance. This does not take into account the fact that we have hymns to the gods but *not* praises of the good or virtues in this first city. There are no such praises because there are not yet good men. To be simple and innocent is not the same thing as to be good. It is perhaps necessary to mention that today.

The external plan here is very clear. We have war and [are] thus need of soldiers. These must be professional soldiers and men of certain natural gifts; moreover, they must have had a specific education. What we are discussing today, beginning 376c (page 173) [is] the education of these guardians. We see here the statement referred to in today's report,ⁱⁱ that we will discuss education only for the sake of seeing how justice and injustice comes into being in the city. This means we will not discuss education simply. It is thus a qualified discussion of education. At this point (page 175) Adeimantus takes over.ⁱⁱⁱ These changes of character are very important. Adeimantus takes over because as a musical man, in the Greek sense of the word; he is particularly concerned with poetry. We have seen in his speech at the beginning of the second book that he was particularly concerned with the bad speeches by the poets on justice. Then they go on, as Socrates outlines it to found a city in speech. But he makes a very strange remark (middle, page 175); he compares what is going on here in the *Republic* to a myth.^{iv} What could he mean by this? As you can see, we are concerned here with the very serious and rational question of the best society. If you read from the later books of Aristotle's *Politics*, where you have an Aristotelian sketch of the best polity, you see there is nothing mythical about it. There are only sober deliberations about what is the end of the good society, what are the best institutions, and what are the necessary and desirable conditions for that. Why does Socrates suggest there is something mythical about this, or at least that this speech about the best polis resembles a myth, i.e., an untrue speech? What is the status of the best polity? It is not. An account of the best polity, then, is a speech about that which is not. It is not this simple, but we must not neglect this point. It is a speech about something which could be, according to Plato and Aristotle. Still it's generally not in existence; its essence is not to be. Thus it is in a strange intermediate zone between what is and what is not. One could say that exactly the same thing is true of the myth. The myth can never be completely untrue, but always must contain an element of truth. To that extent these things are also between truth and untruth. Needless to say, however, the status of the speech on the best regime is not simply a myth. It looks like or resembles a myth, but there is some closer connection between the best regime and myth proper. What is the most important content of myths?

ⁱ Plato *Republic* 372e4-6.

ⁱⁱ A student's paper was read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

ⁱⁱⁱ 376d4-7.

^{iv} 376d9-10.

Student: Possibly the moral effects are the characteristic element.

LS: They may have moral or they may have immoral effects, but what is the subject matter with which the myth is concerned? When Plato speaks in the *Laws* (page 739[b to e]) about the *Republic*, he says that such a polis or city would be possible only if inhabited by gods or sons of gods. What I am suggesting is that the best polity as Plato understands it replaces the assembly of and totality of the gods or the heroes, the sons of gods. Perhaps this will become clearer later on.

Student: Does this mean that the people who are dwelling in this city will become as gods themselves?

LS: Much depends on what part of the city you are speaking of. This is not yet clear. Up to now he has spoken only of one part. He has mentioned that there are shoemakers and so on, but these have barely been touched upon. The full structure of the city will emerge only later, and we will find that there are three parts of it. Every statement about the perfect *polis* of Plato must be qualified so as to indicate to what part of it the statement applies. Take the simple example of property. Is there communism in all parts of the city or only among the guardians? The same thing does not apply equally to all parts of the city. As to the problem of the gods, we see partly what Plato thought about them in the section we are presently discussing. Let us go on.

On the same page (173, 376a) Socrates says: "What then is our education, or is it hard to find a better than that which no time has found out?" This is gymnastics for the body and music for the soul. What does this reference to the given character of the substance of education mean?

Student: It seemed to me that this was a convenient starting point from which they might begin.

LS: Would it have not been much more convenient to say that they will not refer to the established order, or to simply ignore the established order? Socrates's statement is something like this: we don't have to think much about government; the necessity of government has been found out since olden times. What do we know about government then? You must admit that the changes he makes in musical education are enormous. Perhaps this is Plato's notion of the traditional: that there is a difference between the body and the soul and that there must be some care of the body on the one hand and the soul on the other. Only an extremist would argue otherwise. What he takes over from the traditional in the end is absolutely trivial. Socrates pretends to be much closer to the traditional view than he later on appears to be. Is this not so? Moreover, it is clear that Socrates does not say it is impossible to find something better than the ancient or traditional; he only says that it is difficult. This is true, and the burden of proof always rests on the innovator.

The question is now raised about what should be treated first: gymnastics or music? What does he say? For our purposes, we may call music "poetry." Which comes first?

Student: Music or poetry.

LS: Why? Music precedes gymnastic in time. Do you think this is the full reason why Socrates chooses to take music first? What is the full reason? It is really not priority in time but rather

priority in importance. In the immediate sequel, the same question arises. Which come first: true speeches or untrue speeches? Fairy tales come first. Again we have to apply the same reasoning. They are said to come first in time. This is the only reason they come first. Could it not also be that they come first because they are first in importance? In the sequel—this becomes especially clear in 377a to b—there is a constant confusion which characterizes the argument. The question is whether the speeches are to be selected from the point of view of truth or from the point of view of moral effect. This issue is deliberately obscured throughout. Are the stories condemned because of their falseness or because of their ugliness?

This is always obscured. For example, at the end of 377e, Socrates reveals a certain hesitation to speak. I noted a further point onⁱ [pages 181 to 183], where Socrates refers to terrible stories of unfilial behavior on the part of the gods as related by Homer.^v He says (page 183 top): “But we must not admit it into our city either as allegory or without allegory.” Allegory is a bad translation. It may have become the meaning of the term after Plato, perhaps even in Plato’s time, but the original meaning is something different. When you speak of allegory, then you might speak of this simple and stupid one-to-one relation which became too common in the Stoics and so on; but the original meaning contains the idea of an underlying thought or hidden thought. It is not simply the idea that each god refers to a certain principle, but rather refers to the meaning of the whole story or the part of the story involved. As an example, what does Odysseus mean? Why is wisdom connected with traveling and with these strange places and goddesses? The reason the poet has for telling these stories: these are the hidden thoughts of Homer. This is what Socrates means. Socrates admits here the fact that there may be such hidden thoughts of Homer or Hesiod, but this is absolutely irrelevant as far as the use in schools is concerned. The young people would not be able to discern these. Today I think the general view is that there are no such hidden thoughts of the poets, although the moment you raise the question why Homer makes these and these choices of plot, of individual, of story, and of character, you are already in the midst of this question.

Now the first great subject in connection with education are the stories about the gods. Plato here introduces a term which was unknown before and which has since become famous: theology. This does not mean that it did not already exist; this is hard to say. While you find the statement in many books that Plato coined this term, this is still unknowable. It is important that Adeimantus and not Socrates introduces it, 379a (page 183). Adeimantus substitutes the word theology for mythology. Theology means simply speech about the gods. Now what is that speech about the gods? First let us never forget the context; the context is speeches which should educate the soldiers. Plato wrote another theological statement, in a way much more important than the one here, in the tenth book of the *Laws*. There you find the first demonstration of the existence of gods.^{vi} The context there is penal law.^{vii} A question is whether the context, here fairy tales and in the *Laws* penal laws, does not have an effect on the dignity of the argument as well as its significance. The problem of context is always crucial in the Platonic dialogue. As it is developed here, theology consists of two dogmas or theses.^{viii} Which are these?

^v 378b8-e3.

^{vi} See *Laws* 893b1-899d4.

^{vii} 884a1-885b9.

^{viii} *Republic* 379b1-383c7.

Student: That god is good, and that god is not a source of² [untruth].

LS: You can put the emphasis on the latter, but I think the thesis is broader: god is unchangeable. When you go over the argument carefully, especially the first part, you see that Plato uses god in the singular. Later on, when he turns to the poetic quotations, he uses the plural. This is at least once crucial indication that Plato would never have accepted the Greek stories about the gods as true. On the other hand, however, he never questions explicitly the many gods, but only surreptitiously replaces the many by one in many instances such as the one here.

Student: Is this because he accepts the usefulness of speaking about many gods to children or to common people?

LS: But we must not forget the fate of Socrates. According to Plato's presentation of the issue, Socrates was condemned to death because he did not believe that the gods worshipped by the city of Athens existed. Plato makes this quite clear throughout the *Apology*. If the denial of these gods—Zeus, Apollo, and so on—was a capital offense, what could Plato do?

Same Student: But at times it is said that these charges against Socrates were merely a pretext, that even his accusers were not so deeply concerned with the issue of whether there were many or few gods.

LS: How do these historians know what they say? You can only say there was a broad probability that this was the case. In view of the fact that there is no evidence, one might argue this, although this particular thing makes some sense. Surely there have been such cases. Do you think everyone who turns someone in for income tax evasion is concerned with the honesty of all American citizens in tax matters? A question of revenge might enter, but still the law is used as an instrument of revenge. The law exists. Whatever the motives of Socrates's accusers may have been, we must remember that the law existed. Even though the law may be dormant for all normal purposes, the moment someone, no matter what the reasons involved, makes it alive by appealing to it, what can you do? It is impossible in such a situation to abolish it. The hidden agreement of the community was certainly in favor of that law, as is shown by much evidence. Moreover, nothing is more important in this matter than Plato's own diagnosis. He knew these people better than later observers, and yet he made the basis of Socrates's trial the fact that he did not believe in the gods worshiped by the city of Athens. If you read the *Apology*, you will see that Socrates never meets that accusation. He creates the impression, the impression among superficial readers, those lacking any understanding of a legal argument, that he does meet it, because he refers to an oracle of Apollo. I have no doubt that Socrates did not believe in the existence of the gods worshiped in the city. I am sure the same applies to Plato, but it was impossible to deny them without formally committing a crime. Whether legal action would be taken or not depended on the presence or absence of informers. No sane person, however, would want to take an action that would leave him open to blackmail on the part of informers, unless he wishes to be a witness to the untruth of the established traditions. This was not Plato's function, or at least what he thought his function to be.

There is an inevitable error in this particular section. The translator introduces God with a capital G at this juncture, but this is obviously something that will only lead the modern reader astray.

Let us explore this whole idea a little bit further. If you take Aphrodite, certainly not what we would have regarded thirty years ago as the incarnation of good, we have to ask whether it was the mere power of Aphrodite which made her an object of worship. Was it not perhaps awe of the power of sex? There is something more to that than mere power, i.e., the ability to kill, to torture, etc. These things alone do not create worship given a certain level of sophistication. Thus there is nothing striking in Adeimantus's answer. This leaves the question of whether gods exist; however, entirely open. I think this is intended.

Student: The problem seems to be whether Socrates views the gods as worthy objects of worship.

LS: By definition they are. Gods are meant to be superhuman beings; they excel human beings. To excel human beings means not to excel them in defects but in positive qualities. Adeimantus is too sophisticated simply to regard physical power as a sufficient reason for worship. We must keep this in mind.

Student: The examples taken here are from the *Iliad* and the writings of Hesiod. Are these the traditional gods that were worshiped?

LS: That is a very good point. I see that you use the proper legal approach here and that is absolutely indispensable. As we will see here Socrates does not say a word about the gods worshiped by the *polis*, but rather speaks only of the gods as described by the poets. It is clear that he was aware of the possible consequences of any other approach. Note that with regard to the first example of the images or pictures painted on the garment of Athene, a kind of official statement, we find that Socrates is very hesitant to criticize that.^{ix} That the gods of which he speaks and the beliefs which he attacks here were the ordinary beliefs among Greeks is true. Thus they were also the official beliefs of the people of Athens, although it is to be noted that this is not fully developed. But there is a difference here. He can attack Homer because quite a few things which Homer said were really said only on the basis of Homer and were not part of ordinary popular belief. This is somewhat subtle, but the entire situation borders on the legal and thus calls for a certain legal subtlety.

The premise or assertion is made without any proof that god is good and thus cannot be the cause of evil. Where do we find the cause of evil?

Student: Evil might be present when used to punish those who are wrongdoers.

LS: But that is not evil. Where does it come that there are evil men who deserve punishment? The gods are punitive; that is important. But this characteristic is part of their goodness. Punishment means a restoration of goodness. But from where does evil come, if it does not come from god?

Same Student: I don't think the answer is given.

^{ix} 378c3-6.

LS: What would you guess?

Same Student: Perhaps there is another god; a god who serves as the source of evil. I believe there were ancient religions which presented this kind of duality.

LS: Perhaps there is even use of this in Plato's *Laws*. But there is another possibility here. We must not forget that they are making a city here, but when he describes the simple city, the vegetarian city, he appeals in fact to the notion of a perfect beginning of the human race. At the beginning, men were innocent and good. How does it come that the first city is destroyed?

Student: Through the introduction of luxury.

LS: Could you not say sin? This might be one way out of the problem: all evil owes its origin to the misuse of freedom. We will find an allusion to that later on in the tenth book.^x There seem to be two possibilities. Either there is a cause of evil wholly independent of thought (and this does not have to be a god; it could very well be what some people call matter) or better yet, god, or evil always owes its origin to the misuse of freedom by created beings. The former proves incompatible with the thought of omnipotence, while the latter is quite compatible with this thought. The latter is also the biblical thought. We must keep this in mind.

Student: In Plato would that be after birth or before birth? Would it be a question of choosing a bad soul?

LS: That is a very difficult question and it depends upon the solution of a previous question: did Plato assume a beginning of the world altogether? In the *Timaeus* he seems to do that, but whether that is not merely part of a probable story is a long question.

Student: Does evil have a proper cause for Plato or is it a deficiency?

LS: You can put it in several ways. It is clear that there is evil. From what does that evil spring or arise? The ontological status of evil does not dispose of the simple question of its cause.

Student: With reference to your formulation of evil—the result of the misuse of freedom—can there only be evil with relation to man? Is man the only one who can misuse freedom?

LS: Maybe there are angels who could also do that.

Same Student: But not things of nature?

LS: No. This is a very long question, however, and I advise you to read the *City of God*. These problems are explored at great length there. The story of the fall is treated more forcefully there than anywhere else.^{xi}

The second consideration is that god does not change or that he is immutable, 380d (page 189).

^x 617d6-e5.

^{xi} Apparently a reference to Augustine, *City of God*, books 13-14.

In this case Adeimantus is not so sure that this is so. This is interesting. This is less obvious to him than that god is good. For him there is no intrinsic imperfection in god. Changing means everything, e.g., locomotion, etc. Why should it be an imperfection of the sun that it moves? Try to think of this in Adeimantus's terms. Let us look at 381a (page 191). "Is not the soul that is bravest and most intelligent least disturbed and altered by any external influence." This may throw some light on the notion of god which is somehow presupposed, especially in the thought of Adeimantus. God is of superhuman intelligence and superhuman courage or manliness. You see that there is no reference here to temperance and justice. The emphasis on intelligence and courage in contradistinction to the other cardinal virtues reminds us of Calicles, who freely admits only these two qualities of man as natural virtues.^{xii} One might identify the difficulty in this fashion. In the Homeric notion attacked by Socrates the superhuman intelligence/ power of the gods is admitted. The temperance and justice are less clearly represented there.

In 382a Socrates brings up as a corollary to the unchangeability of the gods the following thought. If the gods are perfect there is no reason whatever for them to change. Every change would be change for the worse. The corollary to that is that they would not change appearances; they would not appear in the form of a bird or in the form of an old man as the gods do in Homer. They have no reason to deceive. Let us read that, 382a (page 193). "Consider, said I, would a god wish to deceive or lie by presenting in either word or action what is only appearance. I don't know, replied Adeimantus." Adeimantus is not sure whether a god might not wish to lie. Why is this compatible in Adeimantus's opinion with the goodness of the gods? If what I presuppose about Adeimantus's understanding of gods is true, that they are beings of superhuman excellence, then the source of his substantive knowledge of the gods will be what he knows about human excellence. He will only multiply this human excellence. Is it compatible with the goodness of good men to lie? I think Adeimantus is certainly right here. Why should the gods not lie as well? How does Socrates get out of this fix? The good men, men who are rulers of the city, will lie, but the gods, who are still better than these good men, will not lie. How do you get out of that? Why do the good men in the city lie? Which part of the city lies? The rulers. Why do they lie?

Student: They are forced to.

LS: Why?

Same Student: Because of the lack of knowledge.

LS: But lying presupposes knowledge. You cannot lie if you do not know the truth.

Same Student: It is the best thing that can be done under particular circumstances.

LS: This is too general. What are the examples given later on?

Student: As a means of deceiving the enemy.^{xiii}

^{xii} Plato *Gorgias* 490a6-8, 491c4-492c8.

^{xiii} *Republic* 382c6-10.

LS: In this case, you can say that it is fear of the enemy. What about the situations at home? Do they not lie at home? Consider the example of the physician and the patient or the example of the children and the parent. Does the physician fear the patient? Does the parent fear the child? They lie for the good of their subjects, because the subjects would not understand the true reasons why these things should be done. A small child would not know that it is to his good to be operated upon. One tells him a fictitious reason so that he will be willing to undergo the operation. If it is true that good men for good reasons lie to their subjects, why do not the gods, who are better than human beings, lie to men? One possibility is that the gods do not rule. This is an interesting question.

In this section, the crucial distinction is made between the lie in the soul and the lie in speech. The lie in the soul is simply bad; the lie in speech is only an imitation of the lie in the soul and has a different status. But why does he make this statement on page 195 (bottom)?^{xiv} We are now almost at the end of the book. Here we find a statement making clear what the purpose of this part of the education is: (a) education toward worship of gods; (b) education toward being godly or divine; and (c) education toward honoring of gods, parents, and respect for mutual friendship. These are the reasons why these and these stories have been told about the gods. These stories of the goodness and unchangeability of the gods have a specific educational function. They are not meant to produce all parts of human virtue but only one part. This is restated at the beginning of the third book. In the sequel, four other qualities are presented as objectives of the education of the gods. The first is honor gods and parents and be friends among yourselves. This could mean justice. It is best perhaps to say that the three are honoring gods, parents, and friendship. As to the other four qualities, the first is courage or manliness, the second is avoidance of laughter, the 3[third] is truthfulness, and the 4[fourth] is moderation.^{xv} Justice comes in an entirely different context later on. Let me make a few more comments with regard to these various virtues. The education toward manliness is to be achieved by the proper kind of stories about the hereafter. You found a difficulty here?

Student: I thought that the heroes depicted by Homer were aware of this hereafter and yet they still endured much, they still were brave, and they still showed courage. Socrates will minimize these things and indicate that such evil things will not befall an individual after death. Thus one will really have nothing to worry about.

LS: The point you make is very good. If Achilles, the incarnation of manliness, was manly even though he had this understanding of Hades, why cannot other men be manly? How could you defend Socrates against yourself?

Same Student: Socrates would probably answer that our men are not the sons of gods.

LS: What is possible for Jupiter, then, is not also possible for an ox. Ordinary human beings are not in a position to do what these people have done. Could one argue along these lines? Which other reason might Socrates have for discouraging these gruesome stories?

Student: Perhaps they are not true.

^{xiv} 382c10-383c7.

^{xv} 386a1-390d6.

LS: This would not be essential for the pedagogical function. What is the purpose of the education altogether? What is stated at the end of the section on education? Love of the beautiful.^{xvi} If you have no other reasoning in a given case to support why Socrates says a particular thing, I would suggest this might be worthwhile. Would the love of the beautiful be decreased or increased by such recommendations as he makes? Consider this in connection with these gruesome stories. Would the love of the beautiful be increased by the continuance of such stories? There are a few other points on which I should like to make a few comments.

In 387b (page 205) he says, after having quoted some stories from Homer, they are to be rejected not because they are not poetic. The more poetic they are the less we can tolerate their being listened to. This is important. Plato makes this distinction throughout. All the verses which he quotes from Homer or other poets are very poetic; this quality is not questioned. What is questioned is whether being poetic or artistic is the highest consideration. Nothing could be more beautiful than this wonderful verse which Achilles throws at the head of Agamemnon. Yet this must be strictly forbidden, because some private might say similar things to his sergeant. What would happen under such circumstances? There is another passage of interest on page 207. These stories of the internal pit and so on are mentioned. He indicates they may be good for some purposes.^{xvii} Here you have another reason why Socrates speaks of these stories of Hades: they are not fit for the soldiers or guardians, but they are fit for another purpose. What could that purpose be?

Student: Perhaps they may be told to other people than the guardians.

LS: Who are they?

Student: The common folk or the artisans.

LS: This is perfectly possible. Could you adduce some argument in favor of that suggestion? Consider the myth at the end of the *Gorgias*.^{xviii} Socrates tells similar stories. We see they are useful for the demos. They will become better subjects. You have one stratum which is decent out of love for the beautiful and you have another stratum, perhaps more numerous, which will be decent out of fear of such things, I would say that the remark of the translator at this juncture is inadequate.

In 388e (page 211) he suggests the possibility of a revision regarding the prohibition of representing human suffering. Manliness includes inner freedom from suffering. This implies [that] a brave man would not cry. Crying leads naturally into laughing. They should also not laugh too much. It is worth noting that he signs this condemnation of laughter to Adeimantus rather than accepting it himself. What light does this throw on Adeimantus? I think this will come out with perfect clarity later on. He is perhaps an austere man. A transition is made at this point to a very brief remark about truthfulness. We mentioned this earlier. Then he comes to moderation or temperance. This consists primarily of two parts: obedience to rulers and self-

^{xvi} 401b1-403c7.

^{xvii} 387c3.

^{xviii} *Gorgias* 523a1-526d2.

control regarding food, drink and so on. A subdivision of self-control is self-control regarding money. People who are not very greatly concerned with pleasure are likely also to lack one of the strongest incentives for desiring money. At the [end] of all this we find a very strange remark. (391e-392 a) . . . ^{xix} and why is the speech about men impossible? The speech about men will be concerned with justice and we do not yet know what justice is.^{xx} What does this imply?

Student: That he is honest enough to wait until they have demonstrated it before using it.

LS: But there is something more. I think we should remember that justice is a human virtue, and thus the gods could not be called just.

Student: Isn't this other thing suggested also? We know something of the gods as revealed by the criticism of the poets' treatment of the gods.

LS: To a certain extent you can say that. If we argue dialectically from this premise, that the gods are superhuman beings, then what Homer ascribes to the gods is unworthy of gods.

In 392b there is an additional interesting remark about justice. The question involving justice is that the just men are happy and the unjust men are miserable. "Then I presume that we shall forbid them to say this sort of thing, and command them to sing in favor of the opposite. Don't you think so?" Adeimantus replies: "Nay, I well know it." To this Socrates replies: "Then if you admit that I am right I will say that you have conceded the original point of our inquiry." Adeimantus had stated the case for injustice as powerfully as he could, and had done this much more powerfully than Thrasymachus. Now he grants the assertion that the just are happy and the unjust are miserable. What has happened here? What is the real action of the *Republic* revealed by this casual remark? I will explain it in this manner. We have two young men who love justice, but at the same time they are not sure whether they are not mistaken in their love. Socrates founds for them a city in speech, and then all of their doubts regarding justice vanish completely. Why is this?

Let us assume that they had a serious hankering after injustice and thus a secret desire to be tyrants. We know from other sources that Glaucon had political ambitions.^{xxi} The most extreme form of such political ambition is the desire to be the sole ruler, unrestrained by law: a tyrant. Now Socrates suggests to them that they try to found a city. What does that mean? Let us be or play as though we were founders. A founder is infinitely more than a tyrant. The primary goal of their ambition, to the extent to which it existed, is devalued by showing a much higher goal. What does a founder do? The founder cannot but be extremely interested in the stability and permanence of the city. He will become fully dedicated to the common good even though his primary motivation may have been entirely selfish. He will never acquire the glory accorded a founder if he will not dedicate himself completely to the well-being of the city. He is bound to think of the health of that city. This is the action of the *Republic*. Later on we will see that after Socrates had given them this wonderful piece of candy as founders, he then takes it away from them. He shows them that this is not even good enough. A founder must have knowledge if this

^{xix} There is a break in the tape here.

^{xx} *Republic* 392a8-c6.

^{xxi} Xenophon *Memorabilia* 3.6.

thing is to rise; moreover, his knowledge must be all-comprehensive. This knowledge is called philosophy. Before he can even think of founding, he has to become a philosopher. The question is whether they can survive these two severe operations, and this is the action of the *Republic*.

The next section concerns not the content of the speeches but the way in which they are spoken. The distinction is made here between narrative and imitation. In reading this section we cannot help thinking of Plato's dialogues. Are they not pieces of imitation? As you will see, imitation means drama here. The imitations are described in 393c. Here the poet conceals himself completely. This is literally true. Take the *Antigone* as an example: not a word is said there by Sophocles. Even if you take as an example a performed dialogue by Plato, you find there that not a word is said by Plato. What about the narrated Platonic dialogues? Does Plato narrate them as Homer narrated the *Iliad*? Plato conceals himself even in these narrated dialogues. It is never Plato who serves as the narrator.

Let me discuss another point, 394b to c. Here Socrates suggests that one might remove the words of the poet in between and leave only the alternation of the speeches. Adeimantus replies that he understands what Socrates proposes; it is what happens in tragedy. Socrates answers: "You have conceived me most rightly, and now I think I can make plain to you what I was unable to do before, that there is one kind of poetry and tale telling which works wholly through imitation—tragedy and comedy—and another which employs the recital of the poet himself. This is best exemplified I presume in the dithyramb." Socrates has described the drama without using the word. After some difficulty, Adeimantus indicates that he realizes he is speaking of tragedy. Socrates then takes up the same subject and adds comedy. Adeimantus never had spoken of comedy. As we will see in the sequel, comedy has some importance here.

Let me make a few more points. We should recall that what is being discussed here is what should be done in the polis. The general teaching seems to be very simple. There should be no dramatic poetry, except with crucial limitations. Dramatic poetry means imitating human beings of various kinds. Just as we limit every man to one job, we would also have to limit him to one kind of imitation. The problem is that the man who possesses the ability to imitate of necessity imitates many human beings. The imitating art as distinguished from the shoemaking art has a kind of comprehensiveness. There are all kinds of difficulties which occur in connection with this, but I would like to bring out only one point. In 395b to e there is indicated that there is to be no imitation of women permitted in the first place. The central case of these qualities of women which one must not imitate is "a woman, young or old, wrangling with her husbands, loudly boasting." Whether this refers to Socrates's wife Xanthippe I am completely unable to say, but the possibility is always there. Women must not be imitated, then, but slaves may be imitated, even female slaves, provided they do not do the work of slaves. This is important. Slavery is in fact abolished in the *Republic*, as we shall see later. There are three other cases in which imitation is not to be permitted: bad men, artisans, and horses or other subhuman creatures. As to madmen (237), Socrates is not sure whether they should be imitated.^{xxii} Why could he have had any doubt about the imitation of madmen? Have you ever heard the comment that all non-philosophers are mad? If there is an element of truth in that, and it would seem to be implied in the Socratic statement that virtue is knowledge, then every adaptation of a man like Socrates to other people means an imitation of madness. Thus Socrates is not sure of the action to be taken at

^{xxii} Plato *Republic* 395e7-396b9.

this point.

The really crucial passage, however, is 396b-e (page 279, top). "If, then, I understand your meaning, said I, there is a form of diction and narrative which the good should employ in anything he has to say, and another form unlike this which the opposite type of man would use to tell his stories." Adeimantus then asks what these types are. Socrates replies:

"A man of the right sort, I think, when he comes in the course of his narrative to some word or act of the good man, will be willing to impersonate the other in reporting it and will feel no shame at that kind of mimicry: by preference imitating the good man when he acts sensibly, and less and more reluctantly when he is upset by sickness or love or drunkenness or any other mishap. But when he comes to someone unworthy of himself, he will not wish to liken himself in earnest to one who is inferior, except in the few cases where he is doing something good, but he will be embarrassed both because he is unpracticed in the mimicry of such characters and also because he shrinks from identifying himself with the types of baser things. His mind disdains them, unless it be for jest."

This last point is of interest. In jest he may imitate all these people in all kinds of situations. You don't have to be very learned at this point, but only remember Thrasymachus's deception in the first book. Plato and Socrates imitated Thrasymachus in all these ridiculous details or situations. A strange case is made here for comedy rather than for tragedy.

Student: Would it be a mistake to assume that this is the reason they don't use the word drama: that drama would be purely imitation?

LS: There could be other reasons for that, but I don't have time at the present to list all of them. The crucial point is something like this. Initially Socrates explains what an imitation is. Adeimantus doesn't understand; he understands only when he hits on the word tragedy. But Socrates adds that they musn't forget comedy. He develops later that the kind of imitations of inferior men which are permitted are imitations of such men in jest, for the sake of play. This is exactly what Plato is doing in all of his dialogues, more or less explicitly.

Now let us consider the statement in 397e. Here Adeimantus rather than Socrates makes the choice. Socrates puts the choice in the following terms: either the unmixed imitators or the mixed ones. The unmixed imitator could be either the imitator of the good man or the inferior man. Adeimantus chooses the unmixed imitation of good men. Socrates replies to this that the mixed is also pleasant, and that the unmixed imitator of the inferior is most pleasant. This implies among other things that the unmixed presentation of the good is not pleasant. Adeimantus is austere; he chooses the least pleasant and the most noble. It is not Socrates's choice. But there is a certain connection, and this is the basis for Adeimantus's choice, between this severe kind of poetry and the polity which they are founding. With regard to Shorey's note (note c) on the same page, I think one could do better than this by translating "desirous to show off and to show off his poems." I believe this is possible from the point of view of English.

Let me mention now the transition from Adeimantus to Glaucon. The first thing Glaucon does when he enters the scene is to laugh. Adeimantus never laughs. What does Plato mean by this

little joke? We have spoken earlier of the two qualities, manliness and moderation, which must be mated if there is to be a true polity. We can say with equal right that the austerity of Adeimantus must be mated with the love of laughter which Glaucon possesses if there is to be a perfect polity. This austerity is mentioned explicitly here at the top of page 245. In 401 to 403 there occur quite a few allusions to the doctrine developed in book 6 and 7 of the divided line, the coincidence of philosophy and politics, and so on, but I do not have the time to go into these now.

Let us remind ourselves of the very emphatic end of this section. The desire for the beautiful is the goal of the education of the guardians.^{xxiii} What Plato represents here is a problem coeval with human society. When people speak of general culture as distinguished from the severer training, we may say that this conforms somehow to the distinction which Plato makes. There must be something in society which cannot be limited to the intellectual peaks of the society. This is the love of the beautiful, and this can be brought about only by the proper education; by human beings brought up in the proper surroundings. This is the Platonic equivalent, at least in the *Republic*, to what we understand by morality. This in itself is insufficient. The head of this statue is missing if philosophy does not come in. This will come in much later on.

¹ Deleted "page 181-182."

² Deleted "truth."

³ Deleted "fourth"

⁴ Deleted "fifth"

⁵ Deleted "and."

Session 6: April 11, 1957

Leo Strauss: I am gratified to see that you are aware of the fact that Plato speaks of ideas all the time.ⁱ The more commonly-held notion is that the ideas come up in book 6. Throughout the book, Socrates speaks of ideas. If one does not know what Plato means by ideas, the simplest thing to do is read the previous books of the *Republic* and to take note of every reference to this which occurs. Then one can see what meaning emerges from its use in all these cases. One must not forget this for a moment, especially when he comes to the more emphatic treatment of ideas in the sixth book.ⁱⁱ I think you also made a judicious use of the translator in your report by saying that the rulers of which Plato speaks at the end of the third book foreshadow the philosophers.ⁱⁱⁱ This is correct, although it is certainly not the only foreshadowing. A third point which struck me in your paper was your awareness of the fact that this small and large letters business, which turns up at the beginning of the polis discussion, is a theme which recurs in the *Republic*.^{iv} How did you interpret that in this particular passage?

Student: Socrates indicates that when you learn letters, you have to learn them in all their forms in order to know them completely. This justifies not understanding justice until we have seen it written large and written small, in the city and in the individual. Although I am uncertain about this, I think this matter of priority may be relevant here. Perhaps because you had to know the original before you could know the likeness, this might explain why we first looked at the city before we looked at the individual. Perhaps justice in this individual is only a reflection or likeness of justice as it appears in the city.

LS: This could be, but it could also be the other way around. We might say that the real tree is the individual tree, and the reflection of the tree in the water or a mirror is the polis. Let us leave that open. This is one of the things that runs through the book and in the divided line it will be stated more explicitly.^v We have the general problem of the likeness and the sensible thing itself. Let us now turn to the text.

While we have to omit a great many things, I would like to show you first a very funny thing in our assignment for last time. In 393e (page 229) Socrates, in order to give an idea of what he means by narrative as distinguished from imitation, gives a prose summary of the beginning of the *Iliad* which is emphatically prosaic. All the poetic elements are out and it is much as though a hard-boiled social scientist were to give a summary of a Shakespearean play. There is no use of technical terminology, but it does have this debunking character. At the end, he says explicitly (page 229, middle) that he will say it without meter because he is not a poetic man. He identifies the poetic quality with meter. This is a somewhat narrow notion. In order to see the irony of that, turn to page 213, 389b. It is interesting to note that the translator never notes this sort of thing in his notes. Instead of giving some silly examples from the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*,

ⁱ The session began with the reading of a student's paper. The reading was not recorded.

ⁱⁱ Plato *Republic* 504e4-511e5.

ⁱⁱⁱ 412b8-417b9. See also 410b10-412b7.

^{iv} 368d1-369b1.

^v 509d1-511e5.

where some bright psychologist has discovered some Platonic insight by the proper method and thus confirmed that Plato was not a complete fool, he should give things which the reader of the translation cannot see. Now in this little passage about lies, when you read this in Greek you see the reference to meter. This is not the only occasion in which Plato uses meter in his prose, and why he does it here is another matter, but rather this goes through the book. This is just to indicate that Socrates was not so unpoetic or unable to use meter as he claimed to be. This is only to show you in passing what a decent translator would have to do in his notes. Instead of quoting irrelevant verses from Tennyson and so on, he should really bring out what you need in regard to the translation but cannot get in the translation itself.

Let me remind you of one further point from last time's reading. The education of guardians is the right education in music and gymnastics. The end of the education in music is love of the beautiful. Here we see something which we should briefly mention. Toward the end of this section, 402c (page 261). Plato mentions four virtues which will be achieved by the proper musical education: moderation, manliness, liberality, and high-mindedness or lofty bearing. This reminds us of a similar passage in 395c (page 235) where he also mentions four virtues. The number four is important, because in the official Platonic teaching there are four cardinal virtues. These are moderation, courage or manliness, justice, and wisdom. Justice and wisdom do not occur here. We have almost the same things here as in 402c except that piety is in the first enumeration. This is replaced by lofty bearing in the second. With the progress of the argument, piety in the strict sense is abandoned and its place is taken by lofty bearing. You can say noble pride here if you want to. This has something to do with the fact, as we pointed out last time, that the stories of Hades are not to be transmitted to the guardians. They are another form that is to be transmitted rather to the demos as distinguished from the guardians. Thus this cleavage takes place. These guardians are gentlemen. I use the term gentlemen here as the translation for the Greek terms meaning noble and able men.^{vi} This is usually translated in the English as gentleman or perfect gentleman and I think this is a reasonable translation. The guardians are meant to be gentlemen. Their gentlemanship includes, as we have seen, moderation. Moderation in particular includes moderation regarding wealth (390e).

Thus the question arises why there is a need for justice. We may note that justice wasn't mentioned in either of these enumerations. Why do they need justice in addition to their gentlemanship, if gentlemanship is moderation, manliness, liberality, and lofty bearing combined? Is the perfect gentleman not necessarily just, if accidentally? He doesn't care for it, but he can't help being just because of his contempt for those objects which are the goals of unjust men, money, position, etc. This is the question with which we are left at the end of the discussion of the education of the guardians: Do we need justice at all? By implication we can realize that justice is somehow needed for the demos. They do not participate in or partake of that education. But what about the gentlemen themselves? Where is the locus of justice? Justice becomes problematic by this discussion. After having reminded ourselves of the problem with which we are now confronted, let us pick up the argument.

Socrates turns to gymnastics, the training of the body. But he says almost nothing about the

^{vi} An apparent reference to the Greek terms, *kalos kagathos*, that Socrates uses to characterize the guardians at 402a1. See also 376c5, 396b11-c1, 409a7, 489e4, 505b3, 569a4. Adeimantus uses the term at 425d7.

training of the body. He makes three points regarding which the guardians must be educated properly, 403e to 404d. There must be no drunkenness; there must be the right kind of food, the food of Homeric heroes rather than that of athletes; and there must be no girls, at least girls of a certain loose character. This business about the girls is inserted into the discussion about food and is not made a special topic. It is minimized somehow. You see here that there is hardly a difference between gymnastic education and education toward moderation. The education of the body seems to be identical with the education of the soul toward moderation. But here in this context the emphasis is not on moderation but on health. There seems to be some relation between the concern for the health of the body and concern for a certain virtue of the soul, i.e., moderation. In 403c (page 265), where the argument begins, he says that after music the youth must be trained by gymnastics. This implies that the education he had spoken ofⁱ before was the education of youth, say, people between seventeen and twenty-one or so. That is strange. You will recall that at the beginning he had said that we begin with this music and especially false stories because we begin and start this training at the beginning of human life.^{vii} The children are told stories as part of their early training. We see that he corrects it now and makes it clear that he was not merely speaking of infants when talking about these false stories but of the whole musical education of man. The education, contrary to the first appearance, is not the education of infants or small children, but the education of youth altogether. This has a considerable bearing regarding the theology developed in the second book. We can say that the section on musical education is devoted not only as it appears on first sight to the musical education of little children but to the education of youth.

But there is something beyond this. This is concerned with the whole care of the souls of the soldiers throughout life. This is the meaning. We see this in the immediate sequel. "In this too they must be carefully trained from boyhood *through life*."^{viii} It is not surprising to us that this section on musical education deals with the whole way of life of the guardians or gentlemen. While we might have noted this while reading it, it is important that Socrates now makes this explicit after the section has been finished. There is a parallelism between gymnastics and music, body and soul. This leads to a further consideration or another parallel. Who is in charge of the developing of the body? The physician. Is this quite correct? It may be correct as far as the *Republic* is concerned, but can we make this a little bit broader? Who is primarily in charge of the well-being or health of the body? The gymnastic trainer. The gymnastic trainer is the man who builds up the health of the body. Where does the physician come in?

Student: He restores the health.

LS: What about the soul? Who is in charge of building up the soul? The musician. Who is in charge of restoring the health of the impaired soul? The judge. You see here that Plato takes up in the sequel not musicians and gymnastic trainers but judges and physicians. Here we come much closer to the issue of justice which had previously disappeared. It comes up in this section. The emphasis on physicians here is quite striking. In 405a (page 269) he says: "Well-bred men do not need either physicians or judges." In the *Gorgias*, which is very close to the *Republic* in its theme, Socrates uses sometimes the word justice as synonymous with the punitive arts: the art

^{vii} 376e2-378e3.

^{viii} 403c11-d1.

of the punitive judge.^{ix}

Let me make a few more points in this section. In 405c (page 271) it is made clear that these gentlemen are characterized by contempt for the objects of justice—life, property, and so on. If they are contemptuous of these objects they have no incentive to injustice. In another section on the same page he speaks as follows:

“Will you be able to find a surer proof of an evil and shameful state of education in a city than the necessity of a first-rate physician and judge not only for the base and mechanical but for those who claim to have been bred in the fashion of free men? Do you not think it disgraceful and a notable mark of bad breeding to have made use of a justice imported from others, who thus become your masters and judges in lack of such qualities in yourself?”

Then Socrates says that there is a still more shameful thing in the world. What does Socrates say here? Is it really shameful to have anything to do with judges? Think of Socrates himself. As in our own lives, the simplest sign of whether we have sense or not is whether we are capable to apply to ourselves general sentences. I do not now speak of a foolish sensitiveness which applies every blame uttered anywhere to one's self but only in a sensible way. If we say something in general about decency and so on, it is always good to look in a mirror and ask how am I myself disposed in this matter. Self-consciousness or awareness is the simplest sign of things. We can do this more easily, certainly much less painfully, if we do this with regard to other speakers. Here Socrates is the speaker;² [let us] apply Socrates's statement about judges and other matters to himself. Was he not compelled to appear before a judge and to take the verdict handed down by other people? It does not depend on a man's gentlemanship whether he will be accused or not. Socrates disregards at this point the element of compulsion. Just as in an earlier statement, 403d, when he seems to suggest all diseases are due to the soul, he seems to disregard the power of the body.

I would like to dwell on this for a moment. What does it mean if a man like Socrates disregards such massive things like the power of other men over him or like the power of the body? After all, even the psychoanalyst would probably agree that you can have pneumonia without having wished to escape into this disease. In a way, the body leads a life of its own and can impose its law to a certain extent on the soul without the soul being guilty. If Socrates creates the impression of such an absolute sovereignty of the soul over the body and of the individual over other human beings, this might be thought of as lofty bearing. This is an ironical implication of what lofty bearing means. Socrates appeals to this desire for lofty bearing in Glaucon, and Socrates reinforces that desire. Socrates abstracts from something. He abstracts from the body, or, generally speaking, from the power of the lower. This is the reason why the *Republic* is a utopia even in the modern sense of the word. It abstracts deliberately from certain things from which one cannot in fact abstract. Now this has an educative function. We will return to this point later. This abstraction from the body, of which we will find striking examples later in the seventh book, corresponds to the action of the dialogue on the crudest and most superficial level. I remind you again of the fact that they don't get dinner. That means there is a kind of asceticism practiced while the conversation goes on. Parallel to that actual asceticism there is a theoretical asceticism, i.e., the disregard in the argument of the power of the lower. We will come to this a

^{ix} Apparently a reference to *Gorgias* 464b3-465a2, 476a3-481b5, 523a1-527c4.

bit later.

Let us turn to page 272. In speaking of the old physicians, who he feels were so much more sensible than the modern physicians, Plato refers to what Homer says about the sons of Asclepius.^x What is this story in Homer which shows a much more sensible attitude toward medicine? Will you read this story of Eurypylus? “I infer this from the fact that at Troy his sons did not find fault with a damsel who gave to the wounded Eurypylus to drink a posset of Pramnian wine plentifully sprinkled with barley and gratings of cheese, inflammatory ingredients certainly, nor did they censure Patroclus, who was in charge of the case.” This is not well translated. It should be “nor did they censure Patroclus, who was *healing*.” Whether he was healing bodies or perhaps something else is not clear from Plato. Glaucon replies: “It was indeed a strange potion for a man in that condition.” Socrates answers: “Not so strange if you reflect that Asclepius made no use of our modern coddling medication of diseases before the time of Herodicus. But Herodicus was a trainer and became a valetudinarian and blended gymnastics and medicine, with a torment first and chiefly for himself and then for his many successors.” He became very, very old by his coddling and thus led a very miserable life. It was necessary that he continually take pills and so on.

The translator makes a remark here (note b) that Plato is probably quoting from memory and that in Homer the story is different. What is the difference? In Homer the situation is this.^{xi} Nestor and a son of Asclepius bring the wounded Eurypylus back from battle. The emphasis in Homer is entirely on two things: (a) that Patroclus was sent by his friend Achilles to find out who was the wounded hero, and in a way this was his healing function, for there was a breach between Achilles and the Greeks and Patroclus always served as the intermediary. Secondly, and this is the main part of the story, Nestor's loquacity and the proud recollections of his youth is strongly presented. This doesn't do away with the fact that while everyone is concerned with this story of Nestor this poor wounded Eurypylus gets the same food as everyone else. No one cares particularly whether that is a good food for him. The joke which Plato introduces seems to be this: Did Homer forget that the diet was not suitable for a wounded man, or did Homer not know it? This is the great question. Or did he want to stress Nestor's obsession precisely by having everyone forget the condition of the wounded man? This seems to be the case. To return to the point this raises for us. Homer is the model for medicine. This is very strange because we have seen before that Homer's teaching was treated very badly. Where was that?

Student: In the section on education.

LS: But what teaching of Homer was blamed?

Same Student: That regarding the gods.^{xii}

LS: The question now is this: How does it come that Homer was so bad regarding the gods and so good regarding medicine?

^x *Republic* 405d8-406c9.

^{xi} Homer *Iliad* 11.574-805

^{xii} Plato *Republic* 377c7-383c7.

Same Student: This latter can be more factually reported.

LS: But is this quite adequate?

Student: He can cite Homer as a historian but not as someone who knows something about the gods.

LS: I see. Of the gods he knew nothing, but of medicine he could know something. That could be it. But the question is whether Homer's medicine is so good. If you turn to a somewhat later page, page 281, 408a, where he takes up Homer's medicine again, we come to this statement.

"Don't you remember that in the case of Menelaus and the wound that Pandarus inflicted, they "Sucked the blood, and soothing simples sprinkled," but what he was to eat or drink thereafter they no more prescribed than for Eurypylus, taking it for granted that the remedies sufficed to heal men who before their wounds were healthy and temperate in their diet."

You see here that the same story of Eurypylus is referred to, and a Homeric verse is even quoted at this point, but as the translator notes in note b, the quote is a loose one.^{xiii} If we take the verse as quoted by Plato, we note that Plato makes one obvious change. Homer says of that physician that he did this as a *knowing man*. Plato drops this last and denies implicitly this praise of the wisdom of, of Homeric wisdom. Let us now look at a later incident, page 283: "Physicians, it is true, I said, would prove most skilled if from childhood up, in addition to learning the principles of the art, they had familiarized themselves with the greatest possible number of the most sickly bodies, and if they themselves had suffered all diseases and were not of a very healthy constitution."^{xiv}

If you think this through, and if you consider the crucial importance of long experience in such matters as medicine, you see there is nothing wrong at all with the action of Herodicus in prolonging his life in order to increase in experience and become an ever-better physician. Contrary to the carpenter, who is used as an example of a person who becomes completely useless in the face of illness, Herodicus did not become a useless fellow at all. The suggestion of Plato, if I understand it correctly, is this: that there is a real connection between the defective medicine of Homer's time and the kind of theology he has. Let me submit this to your consideration.

Student: To consider one other point, in the Thrasymachus section it is pointed out that every art is perfect in itself.^{xv} In this section, however, it is quite clearly indicated that medical art is imperfect, and Socrates is criticizing it in this vein. The question is on the basis of what art is he criticizing it in this case? In what guise does he appear with the right to criticize the medical art?

LS: One would probably have to make a distinction here. If you start from the surface you see that he says the perfect medicine was at its peak in Homeric times. Why was it at its peak? Because it did the proper job of medicine. What is the proper job of medicine? To cure the

^{xiii} See Homer *Iliad* 4.218-219.

^{xiv} Plato *Republic* 408d10-e1.

^{xv} Apparently a reference to 341e2-342b7.

curables and to forget about the incurables. Then an additional consideration enters, but this is no longer medical: if the effort required for curing a sick man stands in no proportion to the social usefulness of that man, medical treatment in this case should be discouraged. This is obviously a non-medical consideration. What Socrates says here officially is that the medical art was perfect in Homeric times and decayed later because of an improper mixture of gymnastics and medicine by Herodicus. In other words, what you have *now* is not a true medical art but a perverted medical art. But there was a true medical art in Homer's time. The perversion of the medical art is due to its emancipation from the controlling political art.

Same Student: And this political art may have an inadequacy which allows one not to recognize the dignity of Herodicus's achievement.

LS: Up to this point we have confined ourselves to what is explicitly said, i.e., Homeric medicine is superior to post-Homeric medicine. But if these remarks regarding Homeric medicine are ironical, then it would mean, as you quite rightly suggest, that post-Homeric medicine gained through its emancipation from politics. That is correct.

Same Student: I think that within this whole section there is a certain perversion or incorrectness of the viewpoints, particularly by the identification of the good with the political simply.

LS: Of course this is essential to the argument at this part of the *Republic*. What I am driving at is that one must think very carefully about this use of Homer and one cannot leave it at saying that Plato quotes from memory and so on. This becomes especially true, as the translator notes, when we see that in another Platonic dialogue it is correctly stated.^{xvi} Why did he take the trouble of looking up in Homer in the case of one dialogue and not in the case of the *Republic*? We have to consider this as well.

Student: Can we expect some clarification of the relationship between the sick physician and the judge who has not been judged at some future time?

LS: In other words, it is good to have been bodily sick for a man who treats the body. It is bad to have been sick in soul for a doctor of the souls.^{xvii} We will have something more to say about this later.

At any rate, now gymnastics is tacitly replaced as the subject matter by medicine. In the same manner, music is tacitly replaced as the subject by the art of the judge. I can only refer at this point to what we discussed last quarter about the *Gorgias*. The austere Adeimantus was without realizing it treated to the subject of comedy; the gay Glaucon is treated to the subject of medical and punitive inflictions and afflictions. The problem of the right view of medicine emerges here. Should it be really severe? The classic example is that of the carpenter who has a head cold, who goes to the physician to get it over with, and who returns to his work, as against the rich valetudinarian who is surrounded by batteries of pills, drugs, psychoanalysts, and what not. Plato indicates that these commoners are the sensible people rather than these foolish rich

^{xvi} *Ion* 538b7-c5.

^{xvii} *Republic* 408d10-409e2.

valetudinarians. The problem of the proper view of medicine is here linked up with the problem of the difference between the poor and the rich. The poor are sensible in medical matters. We must not forget that there was no insurance or socialized medicine. I do not make any value judgments about these institutions, but this is undeniably a relevant factor here. The rich are not sensible. This leads to the problem of wealth and the need for wealth. We do not need wealth for having a healthy body. We find many sturdy beggars.

But what about wealth and virtue of the soul? Consider 407a-b (page 277). Let us read this: "But the rich man we say has no such appointed task, the necessity of abstaining from which renders life intolerable." Glaucon replies that he hasn't heard of any. Socrates comments: "Why haven't you heard the saying of Procyllides, that after a man has made his pile he ought to practice virtue?" "Before too, I fancy," replies Glaucon. Socrates says: "Let us not quarrel with him on that point, but inform ourselves whether this virtue is something for the rich man to practice."

This is a remarkable saying on the part of Phocylides, is it not? Wealth first, virtue afterward. The translator quotes Horace here and we can translate this by saying "Virtue after the bucks.^{xviii}

Since a man of virtue will be in a hurry to train himself in virtue, one might say that he will be in a hurry to get fast bucks. This remark about wealth is a kind of correction for the abstraction from [the] body which has been practiced before. But it also contains a warning. To abolish the wrong attitude toward medicine among other things, wealth may have to be abolished. If all are poor there will also be the proper attitude toward health, which the poor have. At any rate, we are at present at the crossroads. What shall be done with the rich and the poor? We see at the present time an effect of poverty and of wealth on sensibleness. In the respect considered here, the poor are more sensible than the rich. This shows that these economic differences are not morally irrelevant. One proposal would be to abolish wealth. In³ [a] sense this is what will happen later through Plato's introduction of communism, because Plato's communism really means an abolition of wealth rather than a communication of abundance.

Again let us reflect on what Plato is doing. Plato exaggerates a sensible proposal. The sensible proposal is directed against valetudinarianism, which is foolish. This does not mean that it doesn't make sense to keep a very sick man alive because he can be very helpful to the community. Think of a physician like Herodicus, who while unable to work for days and days will be able to do more when healthy than any other physician. Plato disregards certain relevant facts in exaggerating this proposal. This is a clue to the *Republic* as a whole. Take the sensible proposal that the most reasonable man in the community should rule. In an exaggerated version, the philosopher should rule. We shall see later on why this is really an exaggeration. Why does Plato do this? Why does he exaggerate sensible proposals throughout the *Republic*? The subject of the *Republic* is the best polity or best regime, and the best regime according to Plato as well as to Aristotle is the object of wish or prayer of every man who loves mankind. In the case of sensible and experienced men the wish is limited to what is feasible or possible, but not all men are sensible and experienced. At the same time, not all men are men of good will. Therefore the tendency arises for these people to forget the human limitations, and thus utopias in the common sense emerge. These abstract arbitrarily and wishfully from human limitations. This ambiguity of a utopia, that it is a wish or prayer of a sensible man and an experienced man, and the wish or

^{xviii} Horace *Epistles* 1.1.53-54.

prayer of a well-intentioned man who is not sensible or experienced, explains this, partly. But the primary subject of the *Republic* is not the best regime, but justice.

Now what is the problem of the *Republic* regarding justice? That problem has been defined by Glaucon and Adeimantus in their speeches at the beginning of the second book. They imposed on Socrates the task of praising justice without any regard to the effects or consequences of justice. They impose on Socrates the task to abstract from the consequences, the social meaning of justice. They impose on Socrates the task to consider justice as choiceworthy for its own sake, without any regard to pleasure, to what happens to the body, to fame, and so on. We can say that every Platonic dialogue abstracts from something. The difficulty is to find out in each case from what does the dialogue abstract. If you know this, you have understood the precise contribution of this dialogue to the Platonic work. We have to do the same thing in Plato's *Republic*, which externally is the most comprehensive Platonic dialogue, a dialogue which deals with everything. Yet it abstracts from something. As a tentative suggestion, I would say that it abstracts from the body. But this is not precise enough. We must keep this in mind. Let us continue with the argument.

In 408c (page 281) Glaucon indicates that he is afraid that Socrates might abolish physicians altogether, or at any rate experienced physicians. So severe is Socrates's indictment of post-Homeric medicine that this is his impression. In the sequel, 409c (page 285), we come to speak of the judges. At the beginning of this he said the good judge must be an old man. As a decent human being he would not have known indecent people, and he would not have had anything of this in himself. Only by long and bitter experience will he learn that there are crooks and rascals. If he did not have this knowledge, he obviously would not be a good judge. Thus he must be an old man. Later on in this section, Glaucon says: "That at any rate appears to be the noblest kind of judge." This is not an ideal translation, but on the other hand it is not bad. What does Socrates answer? "[A]nd what is more, a good one" (which was the gist of your question) "for he who has a good soul is good." I don't want to be pedantic and thus I leave the translation as "noble," but here we have a crucial distinction made between the noble and the good. Although the translator overstates what Plato says, I think it is in the right direction. The man who is perfectly immune to indecency, in other words, is not enough; he must be good. But how will he become good in addition to noble? By becoming ever more decent?

Student: By gaining knowledge.

LS: By getting knowledge in the form of experience and reflecting on that experience. In the second part of this sentence he says that he who has a good soul is good. The man who is decent does not yet have a good soul because he does not yet have knowledge. This subject is taken up on the same page in [409]d, when Socrates speaks of the fact that we seek the judge who is good as well as wise. Here wisdom is explicitly mentioned. At the top of the next page he uses wise in isolation. This one is a man who proves to be wise and not the bad man.^{xix} The opposite of bad is not good here. Why? Because wisdom is the same as goodness.

Student: At an earlier point, it was indicated that there cannot be justice without injustice. If this is true in the city, is it not also true in the judge or the individual?

^{xix} Plato *Republic* 409e1-2.

LS: What is the answer to this? Let me repeat the problem. Justice requires the presence of injustice, because in the simple city, where there was no injustice, there was no justice. Man has to develop the faculty of being unjust in order to acquire the possibility of being just.

Same Student: To fully know is to be capable of injustice.

LS: Let us not speak of knowledge here. These people in the first city, the city of pigs, were dormant and thus had neither justice, virtue, or wisdom. They were just nice, innocent people. Through this act of injustice, grabbing for other people's territory, the need for correcting that injustice arises. In this context justice emerges. This is the situation. Thus justice is impossible without the copresence of injustice. I think this is really what Plato means, and one could even prove this by quoting other dialogues. This is one thing. Here there is no word of knowledge. But you raise the question that this may be true of a society, so that if there were no unjust people in the society there could be no just people. But what about the individual? Must not the individual also contain this injustice if he is to be just? What does Plato answer to that?

Student: He may know of and observe the unjust acts without committing these acts himself.

LS: Let us not be prematurely subtle, but let us say this. As far as the individual is concerned, he can be just without having a tincture of injustice, but he cannot be just on the highest level without having full knowledge of injustice. Injustice is present in the individual only via knowledge of injustice. This is an important point, because this would indicate from a very important point of view that the individual is capable of a higher perfection than the polis. We must keep this in mind. There are two schools of interpretation regarding the *Republic*, as you probably all know. One says that Plato, the frustrated politician as a result of Syracuse and this sort of thing^{xx} wrote a book on politics in order to get it all out of his system, just as Machiavelli wrote his *Prince* and *Discourses* because he was thrown out of the civil service of Florence. The other school says this is nonsense and that the *Republic* is not a political book at all but an ethical book. You must have heard this. Both contentions are true and therefore they are both also false. When they speak of the ethical they mean the perfection of the individual. This is true, but Plato cannot make clear the superior perfection of the individual without bringing to light the highest possible perfection of the polis. You cannot speak about the individual without speaking about society. Thus both interpretations are one-sided and do not reveal the complete thing. But to come back to what is most obvious here. Goodness in the judge consists essentially in his knowledge of both justice and injustice. Prior to that, when he was just a decent man in this simpler sense, he was not yet good—at least not yet good as a judge. Perhaps we can say that here for the first time the problem of the trans-gentleman, the man transcending the gentleman, comes into sight, in the figure of the judge. The gentleman proper is unable to think of indecent thoughts, if we may exaggerate a bit. The judge *must* think indecent thoughts. How else can he bring the accused to justice? Because he is not swayed by them he is a decent man. But he must think them.

Student: Earlier you spoke as if the guardians were going to act in the way in which Glaucon wants them to act, when he gives the motivation for including the military class, but in the

^{xx} See Plato *Seventh Letter*.

education of the guardians, isn't their very motive changed so that they will not commit the acts for which they have initially been instituted? This initial act of an unjust character— ^{xxi}

LS: You are suggesting that injustice only comes in as a kind of fault and that the correction of the fault really obliterates the fault itself. You could say that, but according to the *Republic* it could not have come into being except through that fault. The fault is an ingredient. It can be overcome and completely submerged. To that extent this evil beginning survives in the best polis. We must keep it in mind that this shining temple came into being by virtue of a particular injustice. Maybe this sinful origin shows in unexpected places. Maybe this shining temple is not very shining in every corner. Does an example occur to you? How did Cephalus define justice?

Same Student: Paying debts and telling the truth.^{xxii}

LS: We assume that paying debts will be taken care of, but what about telling the truth? Consider Plato's use of the noble lie.^{xxiii} This noble lie is not a peripheral matter but a basic lie, as we shall see later. If that shining temple has as its foundation a noble deception, is there not some fundamental injustice built in? There may be other things. We could also take this fact that the guardians have to be savage, which Plato mentions more than once. Plato creates the impression that he is describing a heavenly climate, but he also makes it clear that it is very earthly. There is a passage in the dialogue called *Theatetus* where he says that some evil will always necessarily be present on our earthly abode.^{xxiv} It is not simply a matter of human guilt, but the fact remains. Plato was not a starry-eyed visionary. Let me review the bifurcation that I mentioned earlier. The starting point of the *Republic* is the absolutely sensible and central question of the best social order. The answer to this question can be given in two fundamentally different ways: (a) by people who are only well-intentioned; (b) by people who, in addition to being well-intentioned, are sensible and experienced. The one observer is the simple visionary, the other is what Plato is attempting to be.

Let us note that Glaucon and Adeimantus are enthusiastic lovers of justice, but this enthusiasm leads to a perplexity in their case because they lack experience. Socrates educates them in the *Republic*. He tries to liberate them from a charm or sorcery in this dialogue by reminding them of some other considerations. Let us return to the theme. The judges are the first ruling men introduced in the *Republic*. Hence we find here the first transcendence of the noble or beautiful. Love for the beautiful and contempt for the ugly or base characterize the gentleman. Here for the first time this noble or beautiful is transcended in the direction of the good. Knowledge of the good is not compatible with contempt, i.e., ignorance, of the base. You have to note this.

Student: Is it implied here that these judges will have to be exercising their justice over the other guardians as well as the rest of the citizens?

LS: That is not stated, but I think it is implied. Let me make a general remark here. What Plato

^{xxi} There is a break in the tape here.

^{xxii} *Republic* 331b1-c5.

^{xxiii} 414b8-415b7.

^{xxiv} *Theatetus* 176a5-8. For brief discussions of this passage by Strauss, see *What Is Political Philosophy and other Studies*, 120; *The City and Man*, 127.

says about the common people in this perfect commonwealth is extremely scanty. All the emphasis is on the higher classes, and this is the reason for so many contradictory interpretations in this area. Take for example the question whether the communism is universal or whether it is limited only to the upper class. Plato does in the dialogue what he thinks one should do in life, concentrate on the highest. While one remains aware of the lower, still he is not particularly interested in that. A student of political science would be better advised then to study carefully great statesmen than corrupt city bosses. Plato would say that if you understand the great statesman you understand by implication the corrupt city boss, but that it does not work the other way. The contempt for the lower is indicated by Plato himself in the dialogue. He says relatively little about the demos. But let us go on with the argument.

We have now seen the education of the guardians regarding music and regarding gymnastics. Now the two elements are brought together and compared. We see here two extremes: (a) the man who is only gymnastically trained; (b) the man who is only musically trained. Plato makes this comparison in a more obviously funny [manner] in a dialogue generally regarded as spurious at present. There he has two figures, the one I like to call the Pin-up Boy, the gymnastic, and the Intellectual, the ugly fellow, as the second. They are exactly as pictured here, except that Plato gives more detail.^{xxv}

Let us now turn to 409e (page 287). We see that at this point Glaucon is called a legislator by Socrates; he will lay down laws. To be a legislator means to be much more than a member of Congress; it means to be the sole elaborator of the code. What is the rule outlined here? Those who are by nature bad, if [the] incurable are to be eradicated. This is easy. But what about those who are by nature evil, yet who are not incurable? This is the way the problem is specifically stated. While he gives the qualification here, he does not develop this qualification. The qualification is beyond cure. Then you have to raise the question what about those who are by nature bad and yet potentially curable. What about them? Who are they? What is the cure?

Student: This badness may exist both in body and soul?

LS: The same applies. The difference is only that in one case the eradication is taken care of by the state in the case of those who have a bad soul, whereas those who have the sickness in the body, the eradication takes place without any effort of the state by simple death. In the one case dying, in the other case killing. The principle is the same in both cases. But let us limit ourselves to those who have a bad soul, the more interesting case. Who are they? Those who have read the *Gorgias* know the argument.^{xxvi} They are not the guardians. Who remains? The demos. Plato often introduces these things by implication. The harsh and shocking side of the best regime, and this means for Plato of every society—since what is true of the best is even truer of the inferior brand—is in this way indicated. The demos does not partake of the education; this is obvious. Thus something else must be done for them. This is the medical, punitive treatment.

Student: How is it that he says, “and these arts will care for the bodies and souls of such of your citizens as are truly well born”? Apparently these others do require it (409e-410 a).

^{xxv} Apparently a reference to Plato's *Lovers*. See 132d1-2.

^{xxvi} See *Gorgias* 464b2-466a3, 521d6-522a7.

LS: You are right. He implies that something of these arts or of this kind has also to be applied to the guardians. I think we can agree that it would be much more so in the complete absence of such an education. This points out again that the education of the guardians is not sufficient. Plato thus says a certain kind of human being can be swayed by love of the beautiful alone, and this will make them just by implication. But this is not completely true. Some difficulties remain here. They are settled by punitive justice.

Same Student: The implication seems to be that no one could be properly trained; perhaps even the training of judges would be impossible.

LS: This is perfectly open for the time being, but I think that Plato will show later, in the case of the philosophers, that this is perfectly possible. If we consider at the present time only the distinction between gentleman and demos, as we are entitled to do on the basis of what we know now, this is true. The perfect education is not possible. Perfect moral education, even of those who are by nature fit, does not guarantee the success of their training. Thus we need⁴ [complements] to it. One's [complement] is punishment or punitive justice. Justice as distinguished from moderation, lofty bearing, and so on would come in at that point where the highest education fails. It would have a merely restorative and not edifying character. The second point, and we have already anticipated this, is institution. What is the institution which is to supply the necessary defect of moral education?

Student: The guardians will be placed in circumstances where they won't be tempted.

LS: I see. Abolition of temptation is also a part of this. What are these circumstances?

Same Student: Living apart, not having material wealth, and so on.

LS: Communism. But this is to be real communism. There is to be no privacy whatever. We must remember that most improprieties are committed not publicly. There are armed robberies and such things in public, but we can say that most indecent, improper and unjust actions are committed privately. They are committed in smoke-filled rooms rather than in the Midway at 12 noon. If you think this is so, if you think this is true, you can reasonably say that we should abolish privacy altogether. Thus we permit no opportunity for crimes. This is what Plato suggests. If everyone can enter any man's room at any time of the day or night—and this is explicitly stated at the end of the third book—there is no possibility of crime.^{xxvii} Some would still take some chances, perhaps, but it still would be reduced considerably. So we have moral education plus the abolition of privacy, and in addition, a reasonable supply of gallows and jails. Only Plato says that in his state the need for gallows and jails will be smaller than that required in any other known state. This is something, but the fundamental difficulty remains the same: the need for gallows and jails.

Student: There seems to be a real danger here. Should a situation arise in which the state should move [them] out of the context of living this way, say in a war, the guardians would be exposed to such temptations and unprepared to meet them. Consider the examples of the Spartans, virtuous at home yet unable to resist a bribe.

^{xxvii}*Republic* 416e6-7.

LS: That, as Plato explains in the first book of the *Laws*, is due to the defective character of the education of the Spartans. The Spartans were trained only in courage and not in moderation.^{xxviii} If they are trained in both courage and moderation as they are here, the chances that they would behave properly would be increased.

Same Student: Increased, but not guaranteed.

LS: True. Thus Plato says the only guarantee is really a complete cultivation of the whole soul and the body. This will come out later. The complete cultivation of the whole soul is philosophy. All the defects of the guardians, however, which we see, seem to point to another solution. But we will come to all these things later.

In 410d-e (page 289) it is made clear that, contrary to the earlier notion, both gymnastics and music serve the training of the soul. It is not true that gymnastics serve the training of the body. Both serve the training of the soul. This is another statement in the direction of minimizing the body. Here there are certain little difficulties to which we should attend. Plato makes here a distinction between two human characters: savagery and meekness, tameness. This tameness is related to the spirited part of the soul. Are you familiar with this idea of the division of the soul? It is really developed later. The soul has three parts: One is the part in which desire is at home; one in which this spiritedness or anger is at home; the last the rational part. We will come to these things later. The savagery of man is related to this spiritedness of man's nature. If this spirited part, the part to which anger belongs, is correctly trained, courage or manliness emerges. Spiritedness correctly trained becomes manliness. Let us turn to this other character mentioned here, tameness or meekness. This belongs to the philosophic nature in man according to Plato's statement here. He doesn't say the rational but rather the philosophic part. If it is nobly trained (he does not say here correctly trained) it leads again to tameness, meekness, and orderliness. He does not say mere moderation, although it reminds us of moderation.

Let us also look at 411e (page 293), where he says that music and gymnastic are for the service of the spirited principle and the philosophic in man, and not for the soul and the body except accidentally. What do you notice here? Two things have to be considered. Plato speaks here of the correct training of the spirited part conducive to the virtue of courage or manliness. He does not speak of the correct training of the philosophic part but speaks only of the noble training. The noble training of the philosophic part leads to decency and propriety. To what would the *correct* training of the philosophic part lead? Up to this point Plato deliberately disregards philosophy, although he cannot help alluding to it. But something is much more important here. One part of the soul is completely forgotten: desire. Shall we say, in order to be a little more precise than we were before, that the principle from which Plato abstracts in the erection of this shining temple is the power of desire. We have three parts of the soul, and now later on we have three parts of the city. In both cases, we find a disregard of the third element: on the one hand, of the power of desire; on the other hand, of the power or place of the demos. What is the tacit principle of the *Republic*, at least as far as we can realize it up to now?

Student: Are you suggesting that if the demos were not abstracted from or if desire was not

^{xxviii} See *Laws* 633c8-634d5.

abstracted from the *Republic* would look very different?

LS: Yes.

Same Student: I was wondering whether it would be really different, since in the later books these things have a place.

LS: They are mentioned, and Plato says quite a few things about them, but whether these statements about the demos are not based on an abstraction from the true power of the demos, this is the question. I could sketch this later argument for you very easily, but let me simply advise you to read the end of the ninth book. There you have it. The scheme of the *Republic* is not violated. And if you look at Plato's viable scheme, you have to read the *Laws*. In this later work, this power is recognized. All effective power is in the hands of non-philosophers there.

Same Student: How would you attack the problem of training the desires?

LS: I think that before we consider that question we would have to consider why Plato abstracts from these things. Perhaps by finding this out we might get the answer. Let us wait for this. One might say this: in a way, the simple city, the city presented at the beginning, presents the life of desire. There is no anger and there is no philosophy. But this is of dulled desire. The problem is not raised by dormant desire but by conscious desire. But keep this in mind. There is a certain conscious minimization of the power of the body or the power of desire and the power of the demos which runs throughout the *Republic*. Why does Plato do this? We might say that this is simply what every sensible man would wish, that the higher things in man and society should be the most powerful. This is true, but what can we learn from this? This is the real question. We will come to that later. Needless to say, the demos means more than simply the poor; it means all uneducated men. These uneducated men might even be kings. But let us consider a few more points.

Just for the sake of method, on page 290 the translator has a note involving "misspent ingenuity to harp on such 'contradictions.'"^{xxix} It all depends on what he means by that. If he means this, that one harps on such contradictions in order to restore the original version of Plato's *Republic* and how Plato changed his mind, then it is not only misspent but a sign of great stupidity. If it means however that we should simply disregard these contradictions on the assumption that Plato is just a poet and simply puts down what happens to come into his head, then this is absolutely idiotic. All the contradictions are of significance for us. As an example, when Plato gives the list of virtues at a given place and then modifies it thirty minutes later, we have to raise the question why he modified it. Has anything happened in the meantime which might justify the modification? If we don't do this, we won't understand a thing.

Unfortunately our time is limited, and I must concentrate now on the two most important points which remain. The question concerns the rulers. After their training has been finished, we turn to the rulers. Two characteristics are involved here. There must be both wisdom *and* concern for the city. This implies prudence. Concern for the city means love of the city. How is this love possible (412d)? If a man believes that his interest coincides with that of the polis, then he cannot

^{xxix} A citation from Shorey's footnote that refers to a contradiction between 411a with 398d-e.

help loving the city as much as he loves himself. This is a crucial step, because we see here that the consideration of consequences is taken up again. The concern for the city is an important part of justice, if it is not the whole of justice. This concern is possible only if you believe that your interest is inseparably bound up with the interest of the city. You cannot completely disregard yourself.

In 412d to 413a we find a prelude to the noble lie in an explication of the principles upon which the ruler must act. This principle is explicitly called a *dogma* or a *doxa*. The words are practically the same in meaning but with a slight difference. Dogma means that which has been decided upon in the public assembly. The principle upon which the rulers act is a *doxa*, an opinion. One can analyze this in the following way. The first part of that is that my interest is identical with the interest of the city. This produces love and concern for the city. We can call it the dogma of patriotism. The second point is that interest is that which I opine to be interest. We do not go beyond that in this part of the *Republic*. The second point, that interest is what I opine to be interest, is also *doxa*: opinion, not knowledge. The complete dogma, *doxa* of the rulers then is one must do what is best for the city, i.e., what one believes to be best for the city, 413c. This comes almost immediately before the noble lie and is distinguished from the noble lie as not a lie in any way but a *doxa*—not knowledge. The question is whether this is universally true. In certain respects, it is obviously so. In a bankrupt city, you are likely to become bankrupt too. In a defeated and enslaved city, you will be enslaved as well. But there are cases in which this is not so simple. In 413a to c Socrates describes three ways of losing that dogma: theft, charm, and force. When he discusses it in detail, however, he changes the order to theft, force, charm. Charm and force are exchanged, and this always means in Plato that they are exchangeable. Charm we may say is invisible force. Assuming that the basic opinion is true, the basic opinion of patriotism, all three ways of losing that opinion are involuntary, in the sense of 430c, beginning, which you may look up. Yet the charming untruth is voluntary in the sense that men gladly choose it. The other forms mentioned here are chosen with revulsion, brainwashing and so on. If we are attracted by a charming untruth, we gladly choose that. This is a preparation for the noble lie. This is a very crucial point, although I have only time to mention it. Let me continue.

The translator's note, note a, page 300, is absolutely disgraceful.^{xxx} He has never read the chapter on the legislator in Rousseau's *Social Contract*, or he would not have written that.^{xxxi} But I mention this only in passing as a kind of warning. But let us go on.

What are the elements of the noble lie? We can be assured from the outset that this noble lie was chosen very deliberately by Plato. It cannot be seen as some accidental and nonsensical thing, but it must be a crucial thing. What happens in 414d is a kind of prologue to the noble lie. What happened on the earth, when these young men were trained in music and gymnastic, is declared to have happened beneath the earth. This is in anticipation of the story of the cave, which is to be related later on.^{xxxii} I advise that this be kept in mind when this later section is read. But now the

^{xxx} A reference to Shorey's statement in the note to 414b, "The concept *μηχανή* or ingenious device employed by a superior intelligence to circumvent necessity or play providence with the vulgar holds a prominent place in Plato's physics, and is for Rousseau-minded readers one of the dangerous features of his political and educational philosophy."

^{xxxi} Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, book 2, chapter 7.

^{xxxii} *Republic* 514a1-521c9.

content. The noble lie consists of two parts. The first is that they are all sons of the earth, their common mother, and thus must behave as brothers. I think there is much significance in the further statement where earth is replaced by land or territory. The first implies the brotherhood of all men. The second implies the natural brotherhood of the members of a particular society. That is a lie, but necessary. In other words, to impute to the particular society, which to a considerable extent is artificial and accidental, or to ascribe to the actual political society the sacredness of the natural, is the first part of the lie. All fellow citizens are brothers replaces the thesis all men are brothers. You can easily see why: if men would consistently act on the principle that all men are brothers, there would be no war. This would be absolutely fatal to Glaucon and to many, many more things. This is the first part.

The second part of the noble lie, 415a, is this. The transition can be effected by the following reflection. Granted that all men are children of the same mother, what about the father? The father is taken up in the next topic: the god. God fashioned men in different ways: to be rulers or ruled respectively. But if you read the passage thoroughly you will see that this is not simply the act of divine, arbitrary will, but in fashioning them the god followed nature. The god sees that these and these men are picked to rule and thus mixes within them gold, and in the others, [he] mixes silver or bronze. What does this part mean? In any society, including any communist society, we find what we call a social hierarchy. I believe social stratification is the more favored term, although I believe it amounts to the same thing. This social hierarchy can very well be questioned in every society. The demand of justice would be that those are at the top who deserve to be at the top. In the language of Plato, those should be rulers who are by nature rulers. The demand is that the social hierarchy should be in agreement with the natural hierarchy. In such a society only a fool can be a revolutionary. If the order is that of nature the sensible man will agree that it is a good order. You can be envious and all that, but this doesn't change it. The second part of the noble lie tells us that the social hierarchy is a divine-natural hierarchy.

Even in the best city these two lies are necessary. If your ear is grated by the word lie, perhaps you can substitute a nicer sounding word. The two parts of the noble lie are these: (a) the natural character of the particular society established; (b) the natural character of the hierarchy within the society. These are obviously the two most fundamental considerations for every political society. If these things are not regarded as sacred, if they are viewed from a merely utilitarian point of view, great moral difficulties arise. This must be established in order to avoid them. I think the important thing we must remember is that these things apply not only to Plato's construction but to every society. Perhaps Plato would say that they are less fictitious and nearer to the truth as the society is better. In a tolerably decent society there is not a shocking disproportion between the social hierarchy and the natural hierarchy. In a decent society, there is not a shocking disproportion between the territory which it occupies and the people of which it consists and the descent of the individual members.

This part is concluded with a remark on the part of Socrates or Plato, to which we should turn for a moment. I think I should warn you that in considering the noble lie it is absolutely essential to consider the preceding dogma of patriotism which prepared that and which has a different status.

There are then some remarks about the difficulties or problems involved in getting this incredible story across. In 415d (page 307) Socrates says to Glaucon: Do you have a device how they could

be persuaded of this story or myth?" In what way can this be accomplished? "In no way, said he [Glaucón], as far as they themselves are concerned, but how their children and those later and generally all men of later times could be persuaded, I know." To which Socrates answers: "I understand more or less what you mean." It is a delicate subject. What does he mean? The translation here is "for I think I apprehend your meaning," which is more or less the same. What is so touchy in this statement? Why should later people believe more than the first generation?

Student: Is this something like our stories of early patriots, e.g., George Washington, which would never have been accepted in the same sense at the time he was living?

LS: Perhaps. If you want to take it very literally, however, couldn't you say that these people knew they weren't trained beneath the earth, but someone five hundred years later would not have this personal knowledge? Tradition makes the incredible credible. Plato alludes to this in the immediate sequel: tradition will be the mediator between the original happenings and the later beliefs. Let me mention one further point before we stop. You see also when he speaks of the rulers in 415c (page 307) that they will receive the honorable reward which is proper according to nature. This is a further reference to my comment that the social hierarchy must be proportionate to the natural hierarchy, or at least approximate it as closely as possible

¹ Deleted "as."

² Deleted "and they."

³ Deleted "as."

⁴ Deleted "compliments."

⁵ Deleted "compliment."

Session 7: April 16, 1957

Leo Strauss: — [in progress] [Here] the implication of Adeimantus's objection is that the consideration of the consequences of justice [is reasonable]; justice must make men happy.ⁱ It may not be choiceworthy for its own sake. This is contrary to the injunction given by Adeimantus and Glaucon in the second book, that Socrates should praise justice without any regard to its consequences.

Perhaps I can take up two points which you mentioned toward the end of your report. ⁱⁱ Let me first say a word about the general structure. Up to 427c or d, rather in 427c, the construction of the city is finished and after that the question of what justice is is answered. The emphasis has been on education and such matters as war. There is a derogation of detailed legislation regarding all kinds of business. This is somehow trivial. When he does speak about police matters, business actions and so on, we find that this appears only in the Greek. If you would look up 425d you find in that sentence seven objects distinguished from each other by "or." The central one among them is harbor. I think this would strike us even without this device. There will be a harbor in the best city. Does this strike you as strange? In the *Laws*, where the political discussion is much more detailed, it is made clear that there must be no harbor.ⁱⁱⁱ This is very strange. As to the other point that you mentioned, the last point of the legislation discussed is

Student: What do you make of the fact that a harbor is mentioned here?

LS: I think it indicates a great faith in education, and at the same time a great contradiction to the overall description of the best *polis*.

Same Student: His city is fundamentally Athens, then?

LS: There are some indications of this. The last point of the legislation is legislation about what we would call religious matters, 427b (page 343). As you mentioned, Socrates says that we leave to Apollo and Delphi the greatest and finest and first of the enactments. That anticipates a statement in Aristotle's *Politics* 1328b12. when Aristotle enumerates the functions the city has to fulfill. He says that religion is number 5 or number 1. It is the same thing here. In one sense it is the last of the enumeration. This is noteworthy for a number of reasons.

There are two subjects discussed in the passages between 425 and 426. The first is the hopeless character of all legislation other than that regarding education. For example, let us say the legislator finds that a certain kind of fraud is taking place. He stops that by a new law. What will be the consequence? New forms of evasion will follow and a new law will be necessary. You cut off the head of the Hydra, so to speak. The only radical cure is education. That is one point. The point he makes immediately after that, 426b, is that the severity of the badly-ordered cities against subversion is foolish. How are these two things connected with each other? One thing is the fight of cities against all forms of vice by legislation. The other is the fight of the badly-ordered cities against subversion. The link is this. Let us replace education by moral change, as

ⁱ Evidently a reference to Plato *Republic* 419a1-420a1.

ⁱⁱ The session began with the reading of a student's paper. The reading was not recorded.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Laws* 704b2-705b8.

distinct from change through legislation, for a moment. Moral change is basic to the attempt to establish order. The attempt to establish order without it is foolish. These bad cities do not desire moral change and therefore they prevent political change. Political change, the bringing to the top of the right people, would necessarily have as its consequence a moral change. I think this is the connection.

Before we go on with any details I suggest that we consider the whole argument of the *Republic* up to this point, because in the section to be discussed today the question, what is justice? is said to find its answer. In other words, we have reached the end of the *Republic*, and we must raise the question: Why does it go on through five or six and a half more books? Now let us turn to the problem as stated in the first book. We remind ourselves of the two theses of Thrasymachus. First, that justice is the other man's good. Justice means serving others or serving society as a whole. This is folly. The second thesis was that all arts were of equal rank. There is no ruling art but only an all-pervasive art, the art of money making. These two theses of Thrasymachus are connected in the following way. If we look around we see that every artisan—shoemaker, physician, or what have you—works in fact for others. Why? Obviously in order to get his reward. This is really the locus of justice. This exchange or this working for others for which you get a reward is the locus. Justice is the equality of service and reward. This equality may be arithmetic or geometric, but this is not important now. Service without reward is indeed folly, but, on the other hand, greed or the desire to have more than one's reward is also folly. It is destructive of that mutuality without which man cannot live. This is not stated by Thrasymachus, and we shall somehow see that later. In other words, we have a solution to the problem of justice in the first book, although it is not stated. Justice is simply a commonsensical sort of thing, i.e. one hand washing the other. You derive as much benefit from being just as you deserve.

Glaucon and Adeimantus rebel against Thrasymachus. They rebel not only against his explicit thesis, that justice is folly, but also against this implied thesis of which Thrasymachus himself is unaware. They are high-minded young men. Being high-minded young men, they dislike and detest calculation. They feel that justice is something much higher than this mere exchange of benefits in a calculated way. Justice is choiceworthy for its own sake. What is their argument? What is behind what they explicitly say? Let us say that justice is equality of service and reward and thus mutually beneficial. By acting unjustly in a clever way some men get greater benefits than by acting justly. This being the case either justice is folly, because you will be cheated in the process by these clever crooks, or else you must completely disregard the reward or the consequence, because the chances that you will get this reward in the proper way are not very good. What they suggest, then, is that to serve others and the city as a whole without thinking of reward is true justice. They demand that justice be praised as choiceworthy in itself without any regard to its consequences. Let us call that pure justice. But what is that? What do they mean or divine by justice? Not to take away from others what belongs to others, but rather help the others. To respect not only the property of others but the others themselves. For example, one should not lie to them. This would be a kind of disrespect. Let us take the extreme formulation—to love thy neighbor like thyself and *more* than thyself. To take a formulation which is closer to Plato: to love thy country more than thyself. One could say that is not a fantastic formula. It is really implied in the demand that people lay down their lives for their country. They must love it more than themselves. The question is whether justice thus understood is good. This leads to a previous question. Is justice thus understood possible? If it is not possible it cannot be good.

To answer this question, Socrates proposes that they found a city in speech, a good city and a just city. What does Socrates understand by justice? This comes out at the end of today's assignment, 433e-444c (page 371 following), where Socrates speaks explicitly of the commonsense and vulgar notions of justice. The first we may call that of commutative justice and the second that of distributive justice. Justice, we may say using the formulation only alluded to here, is a will to assign to everyone what belongs to him. This can be understood in two ways. In regard to commutative justice, consider the shoe which you buy from the shoemaker and a fair price for it. Also, distributively, to give to those who deserve them the kind of powers and honors the community has to offer. I have spoken of this before, but I think I might briefly restate it here. Justice means to give everyone what is his, what belongs to him, or to leave it to him. At the same time, it is implied that justice is good. There is a certain tension between these two things. What a man owns may not be good for him. Thus you may do something bad by leaving it to him. Take the simple commonsense example. It is just to restore things deposited with you, say, a gun or a dagger, but the fellow has gone mad. Then it is bad to restore it. Justice in the simple sense of giving to everyone what belongs to him is subject to the qualification, if that is good. In some cases, of course, if you want to be really good to a man you would have to take his whole property away from him, because he only ruins himself and others by the possession of it. What would be required then is to replace legal property, which is wholly unconcerned with the good or bad effect of the property on the individual, by another kind of property; let us call it rational property or reasonable property. This implies absolute power on the part of the government, moreover, wisdom on the part of the government. The rulers wisely assign to each what is good for him, just as the physician, if he is good, wisely assigns pills, operations, and other such things according to whether these things are good for the individuals concerned. Furthermore, we cannot leave it at what people have or own, but we must also consider what they do. We must assign to them not only property but also function, with a view to what is best for them and for everyone else.

So there is a very simple way leading from the common notion of justice, giving to everyone what is his own, to the radical demand of the *Republic* which includes absolute rule of the wise and complete communism. We can say that Socrates, in the process of building up this city, tacitly replaces law or convention, the legal or conventional notion of property, and so on, by nature. As it is said in 428e-429a (page 351), the *polis* is built up in accordance with nature. This is very emphatic. In this city built up according to nature, everyone serves his neighbor. In an empirical city that is never true. But there is something more. Not only does everyone serve his neighbor and above all the whole but everyone serves *gladly* and in the best possible way. It is an altogether admirable city. At least this is what is suggested. But why is it admirable? This is what Plato wants us to see. One can say the best city appears or looks like a shining temple. It is very beautiful to look at. This is the impression which Plato conveys, but it is by far not precise enough. We have to go beyond this impression in order to see why this city is so admirable. What was the beginning of the making of the city in speech? Where did they start from? How did we begin? He says the city comes into being in this and this way for this and this reason. What was that?

Student: Needs.iv

LS: The city is so admirable because it fulfills the needs of men in the best possible way. Now we come closer to the argument. It is impossible to praise justice without regard to the function and consequences of justice. In 433b, in a very weighty passage, it is asserted that justice is that virtue which gives to all other virtues their power and makes them possible. We may say that justice is the ground of all other virtues, and that is the highest praise of justice which occurs in the whole discussion. This means also that justice is so very high because it is necessary *for* making possible the other virtues. Again justice is praised not in itself but with a view to its function or its consequences.

Now we come to another point. We have seen in building the city that we needed the noble lie, and we also have seen, and especially in today's assignment, that wars are necessary. We may take up this question by itself a bit later on. Now if the noble lie and war are necessary, is not pure justice as Glaucon and Adeimantus divine it a delusion? Why are the noble lie and war necessary? I only want to know the fundamental reason at this point. If you don't see a common answer, perhaps you can give an answer for each of them.

Student: Simply because of the evil in men.

LS: Let us say because of the nature of man and the natural conditions of man. This sets absolute limits to what justice can possibly do. But could there not be a divine justice? We remember the remarks made both in the first and in the third book that justice is a human virtue.^v We could say it is almost a specifically human virtue. The pure justice, justice which is not human justice, is a delusion. From this point of view, we cannot say strictly speaking that the noble lie is unjust. It is impossible to measure it by any higher standard. In 423c to d we see this problem of the limitation of justice. "Is not this still another injunction which we would lay upon our guardians: Keep guard in every way that the city shall not be too small nor great only in seeming, but that it shall be a sufficient city." The word "easy" in the next sentence does not bring out the proper feeling here. Let us use "despicable" in its place. This is not a perfect translation, but it will bring out the crucial point. It can have the meaning easy because sometimes an easy job is despicable simply because it is so easy. Let us use despicable here.^{vi} "And a still more despicable task, I said, is this which you mentioned before, when we said that if a degenerate offspring was born to the guardians" Here I would use despicable again: "he must be sent away to the upper classes; likewise, if superior to the others he must be enrolled among the guardians. The purport of all this was that the other citizens must also consent to the task for which their natures were fitted, one man to one work, in order that each of them fulfilling his own function may not be many men but one; and so the whole city may come to be not a multiplicity but a unity."

Let me explain this. The city must be one. Thus there should not be a difference between rich and poor. Each citizen should be one, and he achieves that unity by having one function. There is a perfect similarity between the individual and the city in the good city. What is implied is that the city becomes just by becoming one, and the individual becomes just by becoming one. The city becomes happy by being one. But the great question is this: Does the individual become happy by being one? If a man is a very good shoemaker and is strictly forbidden to do anything

^v 335b2-c5, 392a8-c5.

^{vi} The Greek word at 423c5 is *phaulos*.

other than making shoes, will this make him happy? We can safely say that it will not necessarily do this. Now what is the root of this difference between the city and the individual? The answer as given here, the city contains these gentlemanly soldiers and these others, these inferior ones or these despicable ones. The word as used here does not mean morally bad, but it means something not deserving any esteem. I exaggerate it by saying “despicable.” The city necessarily contains many inferior people. These people must be compelled to fulfill their function. They are not satisfied and happy.

A further question will then arise. Does this necessity that the city contain these many inferior people and has to be concerned with taking care of them not affect the status of the city itself? This is indicated here by this not simply ironical remark concerning the despicable things the city has to do in order to achieve its unity. By being compelled to concern itself with these inferior things, the city itself becomes or partakes of that inferiority. Thus it is bound to derogate from the happiness which the city as a whole is capable, under certain circumstances, of achieving. What is the rank of justice in view of these observations? After having found these three other virtues, they then want to find justice itself. Where do they find it? They find it at the bottom of the barrel. It tumbles about their feet.^{vii} This means not only how near it is, but it also refers to the well-known fact that the feet are the lowest part of the body. This can be shown very simply be the following consideration. Where do you find justice in the city? This is explicitly stated. Where do you find courage in the city?

Student: Among the soldiers.^{viii}

LS: Where do you find wisdom? Let us say in the rulers.^{ix} Where do you find justice? In all.^x This means also among the inferior ones. Now if you can find it among the inferior ones, this means that justice can be obtained without any education. They don't partake of that education. Why are these many, who are not soldiers, just? What is it which makes them just? Don't forget what you learn in the hard-boiled courses of political science. Plato was aware of these deep secrets. While the education of the soldiers has been described in great detail, it is clear that we must also look at, and be aware of, their undescribed function. Who takes care of internal order in that city? Soldiers! You know what that means: to take care of order in the city. It surely involves compulsion. We may say that this fear of compulsion and, on the basis of what we have seen in the section on education, fear of hell are instrumental here. These are sufficient to bring about justice. The rank of justice is extremely doubtful. Now let us go beyond that. I warn those who are disturbed by this remark that this is not the end of the story. At any rate, justice is participated in by everyone; justice is all-pervasive, like what?

Student: Moneymaking.

LS: Like moneymaking in the first book. I think we can now understand Thrasymachus. Thrasymachus asserted not only that justice is folly but that all arts are equal. It followed that the

^{vii} 431e10-432e3.

^{viii} 429a8-430b5.

^{ix} 428a11-429a3.

^x 433a1-7, 434c7-10.

moneymaking art was supreme.^{xi} Why did he assert the supremacy of the moneymaking art and the equality of all arts proper? Because he did not know the true ruling art. He was intelligent enough to see that none of the alleged ruling arts filled the bill. What is the ruling art for Socrates? Philosophy. The fundamental defect of Thrasymachus is that he is unaware of philosophy. So justice is all-pervasive, and in this respect it takes the place of the moneymaking art. The decisive question is now raised in 433c. You see by this that even the slaves, if there are any, would be just. This is another indication of what I said before. Here the question is raised which of the four virtues is the highest. It is granted that justice is all-pervasive, but is it the ruling art? The answer given in this passage leaves us with several questions. Is a decision reached in the sequel as to the ruling character of justice?

Student: No.

LS: That is certainly true, and that only confirms what we have said before. Justice is not obviously the ruling virtue, to put it mildly, while it is admittedly the all-pervasive virtue. I think we can prove that the decision as to the ruling virtue falls against justice. Justice is defined (we shall discuss this later) as one man-one job and minding one's own business.^{xii} What virtue is responsible for that principle, one man-one job and minding one's own business? What virtue is responsible for that? Let us make a distinction. Which virtue is responsible for the establishment of that principle? Which virtue is responsible for the application of the principle? By this second question I mean this. Which virtue is responsible that this job is assigned to this individual? Wisdom! But on the basis of what does practical wisdom make this decision? Assigning this job to this man? With a view to what does practical wisdom make the decision as to which man should have which job?

Student: With a view to the common good.

LS: True. But on the basis of what does practical wisdom choose the common good? The practical wisdom which makes this choice is embodied in the rulers. With a view to what do the rulers choose the common good? Does the practical wisdom of the rulers choose the common good? We saw that last time, but perhaps we didn't see its importance (412e). The fundamental doxa, the fundamental opinion of the rulers, is that their private interests coincide with the common interests. It is absolutely prudent for the rulers, you could say selfishly prudent for the rulers, to choose the common good, precisely because of this coincidence. Why do the ruled choose the common good? Why do they choose to obey the verdicts or enactments of the rulers? We must make a distinction between the soldiers and the others. Why do the soldiers do that? The education, the love of the beautiful, and a certain sense of shame inculcated in them by their education play a part here. The many will do it out of fear, we can say. The point is this. The motivation of both the soldiers and the lower people can be expressed by one term, although perhaps a very ambiguous term as we see from this very application. Moderation. Moderation achieved by education and moderation achieved by fear. These are not on the same level, but the same term may be used. In the Greek, the word for making a man moderate is a simile for punishing him. I think you can easily understand this. This is not a very high form of moderation, but it is better than nothing. The conclusion which we arrive at is this: the prudence of the rulers

^{xi} 342a1-c9, 346a1-d9.

^{xii} 433a1-b4.

combined with these two kinds of moderation in the subjects is perfectly sufficient. That they cannot find justice after having found wisdom, courage, and moderation is not surprising. The functions are completely fulfilled without it.^{xiii} Justice is really not discoverable on that basis. Not only is it reduced to a much lower rank than Glaucon and Adeimantus have assumed, but really we might say that it has evaporated in the process. With this in mind we are compelled to turn to the individual if justice is to have any meaning. We did not find it in the polis. There its place can be taken by these other virtues.

Student: With regard to the matter of fear and education, is not the education of the guardians focused on what is to be feared?

LS: I think this is right, but the motivation is different. The motivation is not fear. Let me state it this way. Man is a being which necessarily has fears. The difference between a good and a bad man is that the good man fears what ought to be feared and does not fear what ought not to be feared. But fearing or the absence of fear itself does not constitute a difference between human beings. The problem is what and on what occasions. You can say there is a fear which motivates the soldiers in their actions. That would be the fear of disgrace, or a sense of shame. In the uneducated ones, however, it would be the fear of punishment. Is this clear enough?

Student: There seems to be a certain relationship here with the problem of justice as seen by Polemarchus in the discussions of the first book. At that time justice was also seen as non-existent or practically non-existent in this sense in the well-ordered city.^{xiv}

LS: It is very good of you to remind us of that. There is a certain parallel between the argument of the first book, in which justice became unfindable, and the argument of the fourth book. It again becomes unfindable in this latter place. There is this difference. In the fourth book, there are virtues which are not arts. Maybe wisdom is an art. Let us leave that open. Certainly courage and moderation are not arts. This difference must not be minimized. In this discussion we have the admission of virtues which are not arts.

Same Student: But the connection is not proved. Socrates simply mentions the four cardinal virtues. He does not mention where they derive from.^{xv}

LS: It is undeniable that there are people who are moderate regarding food and drink and are not so because they have this by nature, from the moment of their birth. They acquired this not by learning, just as one might learn to be a shoemaker, but by habituation. These things, these habits, are clearly not arts. I don't want to go into great detail on this point, but certainly Socrates has in mind these three parts of the soul at this point. We shall speak of these later. The description of the city in terms of these three parts is in anticipation of the parts of the soul. It is not wholly arbitrary that these are introduced. Address this question to Aristotle. You have this whole list of virtues, eleven or twelve, maybe sixteen of them.^{xvi} Which of these virtues can really be said to be related to a part of the soul, to consist in the perfection of a part of the soul?

^{xiii} 430c8-432b1.

^{xiv} Apparently a reference to 332c1-333e2.

^{xv} 427e6-428a10.

^{xvi} Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1107a29-1108b10, 1139b12-17.

If you take urbanity as a virtue, which part of the soul is perfected by urbanity? Certain human relations are perfected by that, but a part of the soul is not. If you limit the question to the parts of the soul perfected, however, you can really only find temperance, courage, and practical wisdom. This is just the same. One could say that it is a legitimate consideration that those virtues directly concerned with the improvement of a part of the soul have a priority over against those virtues which are perfections of human relations in this or that respect. This is not so arbitrary. It does not dispose of all the problems by any means, but there is some point in using it and Aristotle would be the first to recognize this. It does not mean that their rank is necessarily higher. The rank of urbanity or justice may be much higher than that of courage or moderation, and yet courage and moderation have this priority because each is directly related to a part of the soul. If you take the social virtues in particular, you find that they have to do with human life, the relations of men to other men in various circumstances, and are not directly related to a part of the soul. Thus they have a different status.

Same Student: In a sense is it precisely because the virtues have emerged that the problem of justice may now be solved, which it could not be in Polemarchus? They are identical, aren't they, with the development of the city? Plato organizes the city and makes the arts as such fulfill the condition that Polemarchus thought justice should fulfill.

LS: We will come back to this point in more detail later. We have discussed the question of the guardian who proves to be a thief.^{xvii} The guardian and the thief have the same kind of knowledge. Consider safes as an example: how to crack a safe and how to protect a safe involve basically the same knowledge. We saw there the difference which Plato or Socrates deliberately overlooked. The difference was that of moral purpose. The thief has a different purpose than the honest watchman or guardian. We pointed out the problem facing Socrates. If he denies that moral purpose is ultimately a tenable thing, Socrates has to show there is a kind of knowledge which takes the place of what is ordinarily meant by moral purpose. Here we have moral purpose in a sense through the recognition of virtues which are habits and not arts. I suggest we have to take up this question later. Why could not justice be a habit brought about either by fear of punishment or fear of disgrace? This is certainly something entirely different from an art. But this, of course, would not be as good as an art. To state it more simply, neither fear of punishment nor fear of disgrace are identical with moral intention. Thus the question of how to find a substitute for moral intention proper in a kind of knowledge is by no means solved here. That can only come out in the part on philosophy.

Same Student: But in one sense, the political sense, the problem posed by the argument of Polemarchus is answered.

LS: If you are satisfied with something lower than pure intention, this is satisfactory. But let us postpone this for a minute, so that I may bring up two other points I feel essential.

Justice is found to be minding one's own business. This may be translated "to do one's own." Here there is a very strange thing. This justice is said to apply equally to the city and to the individual.^{xviii} But this raises a very great question. In the case of the individual this is easy and

^{xvii} Plato *Republic* 333e3-334b6.

^{xviii} 433a1-b4, 434c4-435c2.

creates no difficulty. Everyone does his own job, and by so doing serves the whole. But what about the city? Does the city serve the whole of cities? [No.] I think the specimens of foreign policy given in that section show [this] very clearly.^{xix} It may not be a matter of unjust aggression or expansion or what have you, but¹ [the city] certainly² [uses] them entirely as means for their purposes. The city is perfectly self-sufficient and thus asocial. If the parallel between the city and the individual is correct, however, this also has a retroactive application. Is not then the true justice the habit of a man who is much more self-sufficient than anything we have seen of self-sufficient individuals up to this point?

Student: Isn't it possible to go in the other direction and ask just what is the proper work of the city? This hasn't been touched upon to this point.

LS: This is perfectly legitimate, but I think you will find no answer to that question in the *Republic*. You can say that there should be a society of nations or of cities. This would be the mark of justice. This is a perfectly reasonable suggestion and one which is now very well known to us, but this is tacitly rejected by Plato. The common answer is, of course, that this may be traced to ignorance. Plato wasn't aware of this possibility according to this line of thought. This may be so, but it may also be true that Plato had given this some thought. I believe that one could prove he had given this some thought, because in another dialogue, *Statesman*, he discusses the question of a world organization.^{xx} You have here a description of the state of mankind in which the various states are each ruled by a being in between god and man. They live in peace among each other. One could almost say this is in anticipation of the Augustinian notion of the City of God. In Cicero, a pagan writer, one sees this same notion of a city of gods.^{xxi} The notion of a society comprising all rational beings is already present in Plato. You only have to read the myth in the *Statesman*.

We might ask this question: Why did these premodern thinkers, pagans or Christians, not believe that a human society embracing all mankind is possible? The idea of a universal society was well known to them, and it is nonsense to say that Greek thinkers had to wait for Alexander the Great to conquer the Near East and perhaps part of India to become aware of the fact of universal society. This is idiotic. Everyone knew that this empire of Alexander the Great, while larger than the Athenian empire, was only a partial empire. Everyone knew that there were people beyond that. Alexander didn't conquer Sicily, to mention only one place. This thought is evidenced throughout their works. That war creates a moral problem is so evident to any being of normal intelligence that it is difficult to think that it would not be evident to men of superior intelligence, e.g., Plato, Xenophon, etc. What they regarded as impossible, and what I think everyone regarded as impossible only a relatively short time ago, was a universal society of human origin consisting simply of humans as distinguished from superhumans. The question is why was this so. I admit that technology has played a very great role, but this raises the very great question of the status of technology. Is technology a complete blessing? Is it in the nature of things? We can't go into this at present, but I think these are significant questions. At any rate, it is clear that for Plato the city lives in splendid isolation, and any alliances have only an accidental character. They may prove useful from time to time and one may have them or not. Even if you find these

^{xix} 422d1-423c1, 428c11-d10.

^{xx} *Statesman* 271d3-275c3.

^{xxi} Cicero *Laws* 1.22-23.

things transcending the *polis*, religious institutions or beliefs for example, these do not introduce a pan-Hellenic society and certainly not a universal society. Only a great fool would ever have thought that. Let me mention one other point of relevance here. The transition to philosophy in the fifth book is effected via the problem of war. An alliance or Greek society here means in actuality only moving the war back several hundred miles or whatever the mileage would happen to be. ^{xxii}

Student: . . . [I don't] understand why the city should have to be of this particular small size.

LS: I believe there is a research project in this very building involving the problems of metropolitan areas. Why don't you ask them? Do you see what I mean? There may be certain problems created by the increasing size of the city. We can say that the isolation of the city is essential here for the matter of justice. Must this not have some active effect on the individual? This is another crucial question arising here. We will come back to this later, but now let me bring up one further point of importance.

In 433a-b (page 367) there is a point of interest. We must really consider for one moment the definition of justice as explicitly stated. Let us look at this passage. Justice means to do or to mind one's own business, but he adds a qualification right at the beginning: "or some form of that." Form may be a bit vague here. Perhaps we could say some *species* of that. Later on he says this seems to be justice if it comes into being or takes place "in a certain manner." The introduction of *certain manner* is the same as when he says a *species of that*. When Aristotle discusses in the second book of the *Ethics* the different virtues, he gives examples from other fields. Flute playing is one thing; playing the flute well is something else.^{xxiii} But they belong to the same genera: both are flute playing. This genera consists of two species: (a) flute playing unqualified; (b) good flute playing. This is what Plato means here. Minding one's business or doing one's job is the genus. This consists of two species: (a) minding one's own business unqualified; (b) minding or doing one's business *well*. Only the latter is truly justice. If a shoemaker never does anything but shoemaking, and we disregard such matters as food and so on, this is not enough. If he is to truly mind his business he must do it well. The real definition of justice offered by Plato is not simply minding one's business or doing one's job but doing it well. To review this: here Plato defines justice and his definition is deliberately vague: minding one's own business or a species of that. One has to raise the question, what is the species? Whether minding one's own business as a shoemaker well is identical with being a shoemaker in the proper and strict sense may be so. If we consider our ordinary language, however, where we do not assume automatically the infallibility of every artisan as artisan, some question legitimately arises.

Plato in this sense is not and doesn't want to be systematic, in the sense that he always moves on a certain level of the argument and does not think of how this same phenomenon appears if you approach it from without. Do you see what I mean? The Platonic doctrine, just as the Aristotelian doctrine, is not and cannot be self-contained so that you can put it down in a book as a system. This is impossible. In every stage, you have to begin from the beginning. What is later described

^{xxii} There is a break in the tape here.

^{xxiii} Apparently a reference to Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1103b6-23. Aristotle refers here to the difference between playing the *cithara* and playing it well. See also 1098a7-18.

in the sixth and seventh book[s] as a movement among ideas alone is a utopia. All human understanding requires that we always return to the particular phenomenon acceptable to us and rise to the principles.

One point we must make in connection with this general thought: If this is the result of the analysis of justice—that the justice of the city has come to be undiscoverable or has proved to be something of very doubtful rank—what objection would we make? If you will recall that when we read in the³ [Polemarchus] section of the first book that there is no difference between the thief and the watchman, we were confronted with something of the same problem, this may be of value.^{xxiv} We all know what the difference was there. Granting that the expert knowledge required for both is the same, we saw that the intention or purpose is different. What would we say here if Socrates were to suggest that justice is really not necessary? What would our objection be? If we are to understand what Socrates is driving at, if we are to see the point here, we must not simply accept what he has to say but argue with him. Could you not give a much better definition of justice than Socrates or Plato gave using as your basis his analysis? Could one not say that justice is wisdom, practical wisdom applied to the relations of man to other men and to society as a whole? Practical wisdom applied to fearful things is courage. Practical wisdom applied to desires is moderation. Why could you not say that? Why could this be unsatisfactory? I would say that this is what Socrates and Plato mean by justice: understanding applied to the relations of man to men. The additional point is that such understanding will be acted upon by men who know what is important; thus there is no additional need for good will.

One can say this, and this is only a summary of many of the observations we have made today. If you give such an answer, which is correct as far as it goes, in a way it closes the analysis. We do not see from such an answer the rank of justice. What is the relevance for man's perfection of the perfection of his relations to and with other men? Let me state it differently. Is the perfection of man's social relations in the fullest sense of the word, is this man's perfection? Must we not transcend this whole dimension? This is the theme running through the fifth to seventh books. The misleading definition of justice suggested here serves the function of preparing a fuller understanding of man's perfection than is now possible. Eventually minding one's own business and doing one's job well will mean to be a complete human being. To be a complete human being is not possible without being a philosopher. This definition looks ahead to the place where it will be filled with content by the introduction of philosophy in the later books.

Student: Could you give us something more on the idea of the harbor and its connection with this whole idea of self-sufficiency?

LS: I think this is an interesting point. You will recall the remarks in the section on the construction of the first city. There it was pointed out that no city is truly self-sufficient and that foreign trade is necessary.^{xxv} What would this mean? Does it mean more than that perhaps certain commissioners are sent out to the border to meet traders from other cities and to conduct trade with them? This wouldn't affect the city. The introduction of the harbor brings in something more. If you have a harbor you will find it difficult to keep sailors from these other uncultivated cities from mingling with the lower classes of your society and from putting false

^{xxiv} Plato *Republic* 333e3-334b6.

^{xxv} 370e5-371b2.

notions into the heads of these citizens. This is the big problem. Plato must have assumed that the control over the lower classes in his city was so terrific that nothing could happen even if some foreign sailors and traders landed in the city itself. It is certainly worth noting that this is in contrast with the position in the *Laws*.^{xxvi} Of course the reference to the harbor here does not mean that the city itself must be located next to the sea.

There are some other points which deserve attention. It was noted in today's report that Adeimantus has become tamed in his austerity. This was too austere for him. This is a good point. What do you think about these remarks on foreign policy? What defense might be offered for Socrates on this point? The assumption is that this is only in defense of the polis. But this leaves one difficulty. You will remember that in the transition from the first city to the second city they had to acquire more territory.^{xxvii} This presents an interesting moral problem. At an earlier point a remark is made that they should let the city grow. What does this growth mean? In the sequel to this, 424a, it is pointed out that the city is not to grow in extent but in another fashion. This passage is quite remarkable for a broader reason. What does this cyclic increase mean? I think it has something to do with what Dewey meant by growth.^{xxviii} I think this is an extremely important passage for the history of the idea of progress. We can say that this growth in a cycle means really what we call progress.

Student: It could mean simply movement in a circle.

LS: But this would mean that the city expands to some extent, and this would mean war. Let us consider for one moment what Plato means by this progress. Does it make sense to say that by good education you will produce better natures in the next generation? Let us start from a very simple notion. If people have the proper gymnastic training and lead a healthy life, does this not increase the chance of getting a healthy offspring? The next generation starts from a higher point. They get the same kind of education and produce better offspring, and so on. This could be the sense of his suggestion. In the immediate sequel, however, Socrates makes clear (and this shows that Plato did not think of progress in our sense at all) that this is possible if the education remains *unchanged*. It is perfect as it is, and every change would be a change for the worse. But could one not say this? Whereas the modern notion would be that with the improvement of the race and with the consequent improvement of the education, the principles of education would have to be revised in order to reflect the enlarged wisdom and knowledge of the later generations, this is not what Plato means. What he means is that it is in principle possible that an infinite improvement or an infinitely greater approximation of the same unchangeable standard could take place. In a certain stage of the modern development this is what people meant by progress. There is of course an essential connection between this promise in the *Republic* and eugenics. This means very severe laws with regard to mating. Later on, [in] the eighth book, he traces the whole decay of the good city to a neglect of these laws of mating. In this connection he mentions a very strange number, a numerical expression which would allow one to state what are the best mating possibilities.^{xxix} The entire scheme would require a great concentration of power

^{xxvi} *Laws* 704b2-705b8.

^{xxvii} *Republic* 373d7-e8.

^{xxviii} John Dewey (1859-1952) is discussed by Strauss in *What is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies*, 72, 279-281.

^{xxix} Plato *Republic* 545c8-547a5.

in the hands of those, perhaps medical men, who understand the workings of these things. It is clear, of course, that no one would be allowed to choose for himself who he would marry or mate with. But many of these things would have to be spelled out in much more detail. Let me say that I don't believe this passage is ever considered by those who take up the subject of the history of the idea of progress. Yet it is really very important.

Let me now consider a few other points. One point which is important for the entire argument of the *Republic* as a whole is in 434e (page 375). This passage shows I think that the founding of the city was needed because the actual cities are unjust: "And so we founded a city as good as we possibly could, knowing that in the good city at least justice would be represented." They could not look at the actual cities because they are no good. In order to see justice in the city, they have to make a city. I think we have discussed this particular point before, but it is worth mentioning again at this point. Is there any other point you would like to raise? We will continue the discussion of the following section in the next meeting.

¹ Deleted "they."

² Deleted "use."

³ Deleted "Thrasymachus."

Session 8: April 18, 1957

Leo Strauss: We saw last time that the definition of justice was completed on the basis of an analysis of the good city. But on closer inspection, this definition of justice proves to be unsatisfactory. It looks as if justice is wholly superfluous. If we have wisdom, courage, and moderation in the sense defined, why do we need justice in addition? Similarly, in view of this justice proved difficult to find because in truth it wasn't there. In order to discover justice, we have to turn to the individual. The definition of justice cannot properly be stated if it does not prove to be true in the analysis of the individual. In the case of the city justice was said to mean that each part does its work well. If this definition is to be applied to the soul, it is clear that the soul must have parts. What is the evidence or condition that the soul has parts, or at least that we can know it? The soul has parts if it does contradictory things at the same time and in the same respect. This principle is stated generally here: that the same cannot be opposite things in the same respect at the same time. The whole argument is based on this, but in the same context (437c) you see that this is left open. Whether the principle of contradiction is truly universally valid is left open, and it will be taken up in another Platonic dialogue, the *Sophist*. At that time certain problems are brought up in regard to which the principle of contradiction seems to fail.ⁱ But this is not only an indication that Plato knew when he wrote the *Republic* what he was going to write in the *Sophist*, but it also indicates the limitations of the argument here. It was pointed out explicitly in the section we read last time that a real discussion of the parts of the soul would require a much more comprehensive investigation than is possible here. This is more a crude and popular presentation of the issue and it does not establish the three parts of the soul at all.

How can we prove that the soul has parts? We see that the soul does at the same time and in the same respect different or contradictory things. Let us take a simple example. Here we have a cat or dog who is hungry or thirsty and desires to get at some milk. At the same time he runs away from it. You must have seen this very often. Perhaps it was too hot. Is it not true that the cat does here at the same time and in the same respect do opposite things? Plato discusses this in a way, although he does not use the example of a cat. Needless to say, the distinction between the lower parts must apply to the irrational elements as well. Why does this not prove that one part of the soul of the cat desires and that another part is repelled? That is made clear in 438a (page 389 bottom to 391 top). If we take the complete phenomenon of the desire of the cat for the milk, we see that it wants *good* milk. This means good with all the qualifications. It must be palatable. In this case, the same part of the soul of the cat which desires good milk is responsible for its being attracted by the milk and its being repelled by the fact that the milk is so hot. It is therefore not sufficient to establish a duality in the soul of the cat. Both desire and aversion here belong to one and the same part of the soul. Yet, as you see later in 439a (page 395) when he speaks again of thirst, there is an additional thought. Here we have an entirely different determination. In the previous statement it was said desire is always desire for the thing good. But now we are told that desire is not necessarily desire for the good. The difference between good and apparent good is here irrelevant. Good is taken here as an accidental qualification, just as much or little. On the basis of this one could very well be compelled to say that these are two parts of the cat's soul: one by which he is attracted by food or drink and the other by which he is repelled by its being not

ⁱ Possibly a reference to Plato *Sophist* 236d9-239b3, 252c2-253a3.

good food. This is one difficulty or an indication of the difficulty which is here. The cat's revulsion from that hot milk proves the existence of another part than its desiring part, and this is connected with the understanding of good as of the same character as much or any other quality of this kind. This is a very grave question, and one which anticipates the idea of the good as developed in the seventh book.

In the sequel, 439c-d, he goes over to the distinction between the desiring part, if we may come back to this little difficulty, and the rational, thinking, or deliberative part. As to the former, let us return to common sense and say it is the same part of the soul by which the cat is attracted by the milk and repelled by its being hot. This distinction of course applies only to man. Let us change the example of the cat in order to understand what Plato means. Let us take a dog attracted by a sausage and kept back from it by something else. The simple example would be a stick. By what is the dog kept back? By what passion?

Student: Fear.

LS: Fear of the stick. Does this prove that there are two parts in the dog's soul, one to which fear would belong, and the other to which desire for the sausage would belong? According to the Aristotelian and Thomistic doctrine, the traditional doctrine, fear really belongs to the other part. But it is a long story whether Plato took this distinction in the way in which Aristotle took it. Taken by itself, the example would not prove that this retracting caused by fear of the stick springs from a part other than desire. Why not? How could one interpret the fear?

Student: Perhaps the desire to avoid pain.

LS: An aversion to pain. Desire and aversion belong to the same part. Fundamentally the example given here is of the same character. Socrates does not really prove that deliberation or thinking is different from desiring. The phenomenon which he adduces could well be understood as simply a negative desire or aversion. Plato meant that deliberation is fundamentally different from desire. He did not mean or believe, as Hobbes later on claimed to believe, that what we call deliberation is not essentially different from what is going on in the soul of the dog, if he is first attracted by the sausage and then repelled by the sight of the stick. Somehow the thing ends by his either jumping at the sausage or going away. According to Hobbes this is deliberating.ⁱⁱ This is not, [of] course, what Plato meant. In any event the point is not proved here. The phenomenon with which he deals here is one that could still be said to belong to the appetitive or desiring part of the soul. However this may be, I think we would have no difficulty in admitting that there is a fundamental and essential difference between desiring and deliberating. Thus Plato begins with a distinction between the desiring and deliberative or rational part. This is obvious. The difficulty concerns the second distinction, that between appetite and reason on the one hand, and spiritedness on the other.

Now this subject is introduced immediately before the beginning of today's assignment, 435e (page 381): "It would be absurd to suppose that the element of high spirit was not derived in states from the private citizens who are reputed to have this quality as the populations of the Thracian and Scythian lands and generally of northern regions; or the quality of love of

ⁱⁱ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter 6.

knowledge, which would chiefly be attributed to the region where we dwell, or the love of money which we might say is not least likely to be found in Phoenicians and the population of Egypt.”

In this statement here an important difference is brought out. Did you notice that? There is an important point about what distinguishes spiritedness from the two other [parts of the soul]. Love of wealth is (from Plato's point of view) only a modification of desire. Perhaps it is not so clear in the translation, but it is very clear in the original. In the case of the two other parts it is called love of something—love of learning, love of wealth—while in the case of the spiritedness nothing is said of love. It is just called spiritedness. One has to ask whether this spiritedness is something not contained or containing any love and desire. In Plato's language, desire can be used in a very wide sense and identified with Eros. Now what is this? It is only an indication of the difficulty.

Now let us turn to the strange story of Leontius, a story which is said to show the difference between desire and spiritedness (page 399). Let us read the story.

“But,” I said, “I once heard a story which I believe, that Leontius the son of Aglion, on his way up from the Peiraeus under the outer wall, becoming aware of dead bodies that lay at the place of public execution at the same time felt a desire to see them and a repugnance and aversion, and that for a time he resisted and veiled his head, but overpowered in despite of all by his desire, with wide staring eyes he rushed up to the corpses and cried, ‘There, ye wretches, take your fill of the fine spectacle!’”

This is a conflict of desire and spiritedness, and this is meant to prove the fundamental difference between these two parts of the soul. What does Leontius desire?

Student: To look at the dead.

LS: Yes, the sight of the corpses. What is the action of the spiritedness in him? This is against that desire. But in this story, desire wins. That seems to confirm the impression that there is no love involved. Let me say at least that there is a problem regarding the love involved in spiritedness. The desire here is directed towards corpses, something bad [and] moreover, something from which man and every living being recoils. But this is not precise enough. The desire is directed towards the *sight* of evils. It is a desire for seeing evil while this seeing is regarded as good. Otherwise it would not be desired.

I must admit the only help I have found for the interpretation of this passage comes from a book by Xenophon, *Education of Cyrus*, book 1, chapter 4, section 24. Cyrus is the perfect ruler, and his whole life is presented in a fictitious way by Xenophon. He spent some time as a young man, say of fourteen, fifteen or sixteen, with his grandfather on his mother's side, and this grandfather was a real tyrant. While he was there a skirmish took place at the border, and Cyrus by his daring brought about a wonderful victory. The exploits pleased his grandfather beyond measure, but he did not know what he could say to Cyrus. It was he to whom the engagement was due and the victory, but the boy's daring was mad. Even during the return home, his behavior was strange. He alone did nothing but ride around in order to look at the slain, and those whose duty it was

could hardly drag him away to lead him to his grandfather. Indeed, Cyrus was glad enough to keep these men as a screen between himself and his grandfather, for he saw that the countenance of his grandfather grew stern at the sight which Cyrus had enjoyed. Here we have another man desiring to look at corpses. How extraordinary this is, is shown by the fact that this tough tyrant is shocked by that desire. Perhaps we can use this for the interpretation of our difficulty here. Cyrus is characterized by two qualities: He is a paragon of a ruler, the founder of the first empire; at the same time, he is an unerotic man. What Xenophon wants to show is that a streak of cruelty is essential to the first-rate ruler or captain.

Now this streak of cruelty is not essential to the man of desire nor to the philosopher. Look at these first people in the simple city. They live a life of natural desire in perfect innocence. There is no cruelty whatever. Shall we then say that Leontius had the desire characteristic of the potential ruler, or of the spirited man and not desire simply? As a spirited man, he is indignant against this desire. We have come across this problem of indignation in an earlier passage (366c), where in a speech of Adeimantus there was a distinction about two kinds of just men: those who are just on the basis of knowledge—these abstain from injustice, and those who are just by virtue of a divine nature—these are indignant about injustice. You have seen some traces of this indignation very clearly in Adeimantus last time (426b). Do you remember the passage?

Let us look at this problem somewhat more broadly. Consider the first city, the city of natural desire. How does the transition take place?

Student: On the basis of desire, desire for more.

LS: But is the man who transcends the first city a man of desire? There is a great difficulty, whether the desire is the desire of a non-spirited man or of a spirited man. Why does he transcend it? Why is Glaucon dissatisfied with the first city? What is the explicit reason?

Student: It is a city of pigs.ⁱⁱⁱ

LS: Much too general. It is true they have no cookies, but that is not enough. What about *meat*? What is the way to get meat? There is some connection between the idea of spiritedness and a lack of aversion for killing (which leads in the extreme form to the desire for looking at corpses). There is an absence of savagery in the first city. Savagery comes in via Glaucon's desire. In other words, there is a connection between this spiritedness and a certain bitterness, a factor which is absent on the level of desire proper as well as on the level of philosophy.

Student: Is there some significance in the fact that he is looking at corpses rather than touching, smelling, or feeling [them]?

LS: By all means, but of what does this remind you? We can only generalize at this point. He desires to see corpses. Corpses belong to the genus of evil or bad things. Have you heard anything about knowledge of evil things before? Consider the problem of the judges in the third book. The judges become good judges by having seen evil things.^{iv} Thus there is something in

ⁱⁱⁱ Plato *Republic* 372d4-5.

^{iv} 408c5-409e2.

common between them and Leontius, but what is the difference?

Student: The question of desire.

LS: They don't desire it. Perhaps we can say something like this. The simple man of desire turns toward the good things on his level and recoils simply from the evil things, e.g., the hot milk. But then we come across another type of men, the spirited ones, who do not recoil from evil things but even enjoy seeing them. A third type, the judges, what would they do? How are they related to the other two types?

Same Student: They win out over their desires.

LS: No, the judges! A judge who doesn't know crooks and their ways is a poor judge. They know and do not look away from the evil things, but they see them as evil things. They don't enjoy looking at them. The question to be asked here is: What kind of desire is involved? Is it a desire of man as man or is it not a desire of man specified? Is not the desire of the spirited man still desire? To use later language, the desire of Leontius is a synthesis of desire simply and spirit. Is this not possible? To give another example from Xenophon: bitter things are against nature according to the general view of the Greek philosophers. They are against the grain of the tongue and so they are against nature. Yet bitter and spicy things are according to Xenophon necessary for the fare of soldiers. There is something against nature which becomes necessary, you could say, for the cultivation of the nature of certain human beings. It is the same problem. Let me finish this problem and then perhaps restate the overall problem. In this example, the spiritedness—but first, what is that spiritedness in this case? What recoils? What is it in us as well as in horses which makes us recoil from corpses? I think you might say it is a natural instinct. I suppose it has something to do with fear. I think the situation here is reversed. It is not spiritedness revolting against desire, but desire, the primary instincts, revolting against spiritedness? I believe this is the case; at least this is the best I can make of it. The only clue to this I have found is the thought expressed in Xenophon cited above.

Student: It would seem that desire and aversion or repugnance are on the same level.

LS: I indicated this difficulty by the example of the cat and the hot milk, but I think that does not make sense from Plato's point of view. One might say that the desire for the sensually good should belong to another part of the soul than the aversion to the sensually bad. But Plato creates this problem by saying thirst is only thirst for drink regardless of good or bad.^v This has something to do with the deliberately unclear and misleading character of the argument. Let us take a clearer example on a higher level. Someone desires food. Then his reason tells him not to try to get hold of it. Then the properly trained spiritedness would also have an element of aversion to that food in it. It seems to me that what Plato indicates here is thoroughly ironical. It is really the victory of uncalculating spiritedness over primary desire, the primary desire here being averse to looking at corpses, the reminders of our own imminent decay.

Student: I wonder. It has been suggested that there is a kind of natural desire, in view of the lack of temperance and so on, for the kind of things³ reason would consider bad. I think you can carry

^v 439a4-7.

this same thing into another dialogue where the white horse desires something which the other horse and the charioteer recognize as bad.^{vi}

LS: But the difference is this. If someone has an immoderate desire for food, drink, wealth and so on, this still has a different status from this desire. While these other desires may lead to bestiality and this sort of thing, in their primary intention they do not have this element of viciousness. They may be the root source of all manner of vicious actions, but the primary intention is not vicious.

Same Student: What I was suggesting is that the business of the dark horse in the *Phaedrus* and the present business about the tyrant would suggest that it might be.

LS: But the characteristic thing here is looking at the corpses, which includes an element of cruelty. The direst enjoyment of cruelty or harshness or what have you is something very special which is not primarily meant to be by the distinction between the two parts of the soul as stated in the *Phaedrus*.

Same Student: What about the unnecessary desires, the unlawful unnecessary desires?

LS: They still could be mere desires. If someone has a desire which according to Freud Oedipus had, that would be an unlawful desire, but it does not contain in itself a grain of cruelty. This element of bitterness, of indignation, of a desire for killing is seen in an example in the *Gorgias*. One of the characters momentarily discloses such elements in his soul, but that is something different.^{vii} Now this spiritedness refers to something of this kind in man which may be in all men but which comes to sight in particularly outstanding cases. If we look at Xenophon's analysis we see he believes that to be a really first rate captain or soldier you must not only have a willingness to inflict such punishment but you must derive a certain enjoyment from that. I think something of this kind is meant by Plato. In the case of Leontius the paradox is this, that the noble desire is defeated by an ignoble spiritedness. This throws an important light on the later discussion, namely, that spiritedness is *simply* nobler than desire. That is not so. The praise of eros, which is the same as desire, in the *Banquet*^{viii} would not make sense if desire were simply inferior to spiritedness.

Student: You suggested earlier that this spiritedness is non-erotic.

LS: It is very hard to say how this applies to Plato. We may take that up when we come to the ninth book, where the tyrant is presented as eros incarnate. But I think this a subtle question. One could perhaps say that the indictment of eros belongs to the essential thesis of the *Republic* and thus shows the incompleteness [of the dialogue]. If you remember what I said on a former occasion about the fact that there is a certain abstraction from the body in the *Republic*, an abstraction from desire—in an earlier section we had a very clear passage where he is silent about desire. There is an abstraction from the common people who correspond to this desire. Thus, this point which we are now observing may very well be connected with an abstraction

^{vi} *Phaedrus* 246a3-256e2.

^{vii} Possibly a reference to *Gorgias* 466b9-c5, 468e6-469a1, 470c9-471d2.

^{viii} *Symposium*.

from the goodness of eros. There is a tension in Plato's teaching generally speaking, that is, between justice on the one hand, and eros on the other. The *Republic* takes the extremely anti-erotic position. Every Platonic dialogue distracts from something and thus gives a distorted picture. This is of eminent theoretical value in order to bring out certain other things. The task of understanding a Platonic dialogue can almost be said to exist in discovering that from which this particular dialogue abstracts.

Now there was something else which occurred in this connection that I wanted to mention. There is a very remarkable passage in Aristotle's *Constitution of Athens* about the common people or demos when he speaks of the revolution which occurred in 403, when the democracy was restored after the period of the Thirty Tyrants. The democracy was very moderate. Aristotle speaks there of the generally known and customary good-naturedness of the people.^{ix} That sounds very strange in the light of a certain indictment of democracy which you read everywhere. But of course there is some truth in that. Even Aristophanes presents the demos as a very fat but good-natured fellow.^x In other words, you can say that to be harsh and demanding and severe is something which already transcends this simple picture. If we take the nasty view of the demos which the classics have, we see that they are people who do not make any demands on themselves. As a result, they are good-natured. In the moment you make demands on yourself, you inflict pain upon yourself. While it does not necessarily lead to this consequence, it enables you to be nasty in other situations. I think this a part of that story.

Student: In a sense, it would seem that the man who desires knowledge would be led to observe these corpses, if for no other purpose than to be cognizant of certain physiological factors.

LS: This may be so, but it is also true that he would not enjoy the sight of it. What distinguishes Leontius from the judge or the philosopher is that the judge or philosopher must also examine the bad and know it very well but in such a way that it is perfectly clear to him that what he sees is bad.

Same Student: But it doesn't mean that one has to enjoy or desire something if he wishes to observe it or have knowledge of it?

LS: But the story clearly indicates that there is no desire for knowledge but rather a kind of terrible curiosity. There is a passionate interest in the corpses. The philosopher or judge has no passionate interest in evil, although it is true that he must know it. Let us take another example. Take the gentleman. The gentleman would not do this, but it is also true that a non-gentleman might also avoid it because he has a horse-like instinctive desire to avoid this. The gentleman would not be guided primarily by this instinctive movement but by the insight into the meanness of doing that. But here we are concerned with something more important, i.e., an analysis of the soul whose cultivation will produce the perfect gentleman. Thus we have to see what kinds of things are in the soul. One might say we have to look at how the nature of the gentleman is prior to cultivation or education. That is important to know. What I am driving at is this. While, of course, the soldiers are much closer to the philosophers than the people, if we go back to the parts of the soul we see that there is a very important point where the highest agrees with the

^{ix} Aristotle *Constitution of Athens* 38-41.

^x Aristophanes *Knights*.

lowest and is distinguished from it. What should be clear, however, from the whole discussion of this point thus far is that this distinction between desire and spiritedness as made here is very questionable. Moreover, this simple parallelism of soldiers and the spiritedness in man and desire and the common people is by no means obvious. Let us turn to 440b (page 402).

“And do we not,” said I, “on many occasions observe when his desires constrain a man contrary to his reason that he reviles himself and is angry with that within him which masters him; and that as it were in a faction of two parties the high spirit of such a man becomes the ally of his reason? But its making common cause with the desires against the reason when reason whispers low ‘Thou must not’—that, I think, is a kind of thing you would not affirm ever to have perceived in yourself, nor, I fancy, in anybody else either.”

What do you say to that? Does this never occur that the anger sides with desire against reason? You see how decent Glaucon is, but you see also how incompetent he is. He is such a nice man that he doesn't know that a man can hate the law which forbids him something he desired. This is a rather common experience, I believe. Certainly there have been many novels written about that. Perhaps Glaucon should have read some novels about this in order to have been acquainted with it, but we will come back to that later. The higher rationality of spiritedness is in no way demonstrated; it is merely asserted here. I think we can say at this point that no adequate definition of justice has been given, because an adequate definition would depend on this doctrine of the three parts of the soul. We can also say that generally speaking in order to have an adequate doctrine of justice, you would have to consider not only these three parts of the soul mentioned here (insufficiently established here) but also those four other functions mentioned later on in the divided line.^{xi} These seven guideposts would be required in order to find our way.

There is another passage, 441[a to b] (page 405), which we should consider. He continues to speak about spiritedness and quotes a verse from Homer. “To these instances we may add the testimony of Homer quoted above.” Where is this testimony of Homer? This has been quoted somewhere before, book 3, and there⁴ the context was moderation.^{xii} It implies that it is one and the same virtue which controls both desire and spiritedness. This throws additional light on the very provisional and problematic character of the distinction between spiritedness and desire made here.

Let us consider a few more points in this book. Then he applies to the three parts of the soul the doctrine of justice as the proper relation between the various parts. This is in 441c to d (page 407). We see that he speaks here first only of three virtues: wisdom, manliness and justice. What does this mean if we compare it to what we found before? The question arises whether moderation is really superfluous or dispensable. On the same page, 441e to 442a, a further point: “Then is it not, as we said, the blending of music and gymnastics that will render them concordant, intensifying and fostering the one with fair words and teachings and relaxing and soothing and making gentle the other by harmony and rhythm?”

If you would look up these passages, 409e to 412a, you would see a point of interest. Here he says the mixture of gymnastics and music strengthens the rational part and tames the spirited

^{xi} Plato *Republic* 511d6-e4.

^{xii} 390d1-6.

part. But did we hear anything about education strengthening the rational part? In the earlier passages it is suggested that gymnastics tames the spirited. Music also comes in with a view to the spiritedness. How can music strengthen the rational part? The music as discussed in the second and third book does not strengthen the rational part. But is there something in music which might strengthen the rational part, something which might not have been mentioned there? Let me make this suggestion, partly with a view to the Leontius story. The unexpurgated music and unexpurgated poetry fulfill the function which the expurgated poetry cannot fulfill. What the judge has to know about human life and human nature is contained in the unexpurgated portions. In that sense, it strengthens the rational part. I base this interpretation also on certain observations from the *Laws*, where in the discussion of poetry we find this twofold relation. On the one hand, the legislator decrees which poetry and music is permitted and which not, and in a later passage the poet is introduced not as the subject of the legislator but as the teacher of the legislator. If the legislator does not know the truth about the human heart he will be a poor legislator. And who teaches him about the human heart? The good poets.^{xiii}

Student: Earlier, when he was speaking of the other possible uses of music, as I recall he was speaking of the demos.

LS: I think that was a special part regarding the status of health. But this would by no means contradict what we have been saying. A gentleman in the strict sense would, of course, know nothing about the vulgar except that they are vulgar. He wouldn't read Dickens, because Dickens speaks only of employees and such people and not of gentlemen. One should read only of employees and such people and not of gentlemen. One should read only those authors who deal with gentlemen exclusively. People who reveal the fullness of the human heart and life, however, will always be involved in the vulgar.

But let us go on. The definition of justice given at the end is the health of the soul. This is not quite the same as doing one's job well. If justice is the health of the soul, it is certainly choiceworthy for its own sake. No one would question that. But here, as we see in 443e (page 145), there is a certain ambiguity which remains. Here justice is described as that which is productive of the well-ordered soul. It is thus not the character of the well-ordered soul. The character of the well-ordered soul is described here by moderation. This is necessarily provisional, and wisdom will take its place as we have seen before. The field of justice is also said in this part, in accordance with common sense, [to be] that of external things, the body and other human beings. What Plato means by justice in the specific sense comes out throughout the book, but it is subordinated to a deliberate and violent extension of the meaning of justice so that justice becomes identical with the complete perfection of man.

Naturally many grave difficulties continue to exist with regard to certain passages, but one thing I think we can take for granted. Contrary to the assertion made by Socrates at the end of the fourth book, that the discussion of justice has been completed, the discussion is still far from completion. The real story of justice comes only in books 5 through 7. The problem of the interpretation is to establish in very precise terms on the basis of what is said in the dialogue why the discussion of justice is incomplete in the essential points. To mention only one thing that we have encountered today, if the doctrine of the three parts of the soul as developed in the fourth

^{xiii} *Laws* 656c1-657b8, 718c8-720e6.

book is not proven, then the whole doctrine of justice developed hitherto is still to be demonstrated. The question of the tripartition of the soul remains vital. The arguments of the *Republic* on this point are wholly inadequate. It would be a very useful study if someone, preferably someone who knew Greek and Latin, would make a close comparison of the teaching of the *Republic* about the three parts of the soul with that of Aristotle in *On the Soul* and that of Thomas in the *Summa*. I think this would be very enlightening in both directions.

Let us now indicate a few points in the fifth book. The beginning of the fifth book repeats the beginning of the whole work. At the beginning, Polemarchus's slave grabs Socrates's garment from behind. This slave spoke to Socrates. Now Polemarchus grabs Adeimantus's garment from above, at the shoulder, and speaks to Adeimantus in an inaudible tone.^{xiv} Something has been finished, and we are again in a way at the beginning, but we make a new beginning on a higher plane. There is no longer a slave but a free man, and the man who begins the action does not grasp someone from behind, but from above. This inaudible speaking seems to be a kind of revolt against Socrates. Every revolt is preceded by conspiracy. The conspiracy originates with a man who is in some ways superior to Adeimantus. This is indicated by his sitting higher. What is the charge they raise? Socrates is accused of no less a crime than cheating. They take a formal vote. It is really the city acting against Socrates. But this time Thrasymachus is one member of the city. A new city, of which Thrasymachus is a part and an essential part, has become constituted. One thing is quite clear. Whatever we may think about Plato's so-called utopia, this city described here is founded before our eyes. Obviously Socrates is the ruler and Glaucon and Adeimantus are the prototypes of the soldiers, but the others too are somehow guardians. Either that or they belong to the demos, the completely silent ones. It is hard to say, but it remains possible that they are guardians, since among the guardians some are more and some are less and the demos is completely outside of it.

Student: Is there a relation here between the charge leveled at Socrates, the charge that he has withheld some information, and the noble lie?

LS: You believe that Socrates does commit some crime?

Same Student: He commits the action that he feels the rulers or founders of the new city themselves should commit.

LS: We have spoken of the noble lie before, but now much more emphasis is placed upon the cheating than was before.

Same Student: And it is discovered.

LS: This is interesting. We thought we were through with justice and that we understood it, but now a great crime is revealed. We have to see how this crime fits into justice. This is a simple sign of the inadequacy of our understanding of justice. By his conspiracy or action, Polemarchus prevents injustice from being committed. Socrates would have gotten away with this deception if Polemarchus had not challenged it. Now what about the scene at the [beginning] of the first book: Did Polemarchus there also commit a crime by keeping Socrates forcibly in the Piraeus?

^{xiv} *Republic* 327b2-8, 449a7-450a5-6.

What happened as a consequence of Polemarchus's forcible action at the beginning of the *Republic*?

Student: The discussion itself.

LS: What does this mean?

Same Student: Perhaps it is related to forcing the philosopher to return to the cave.

LS: This is all true, but it is not simple and incisive enough. It leads as a consequence that justice is defended for the first time properly. A great crime, i.e., the non-praise of justice, is prevented.^{xv}

Why do they interrupt? Surely Polemarchus begins it, but everyone is interested in the subject of the community in wives and children. Are they merely curious? Or do they prefer to hear more of the good city than of the perverted cities to which Socrates has turned? Or does the interruption signify a dissatisfaction with the definition of justice given shortly before? The last would be the best of these three. How could we speak? Communism regarding wives and children means complete communism, because communism regarding property and so on has already been mentioned. If there were no complete communism, there would be a sphere of privacy. This brings in the possibility of concealment, the idea that no one can enter your home without a search warrant. The possibility of concealment brings with it the possible success of injustice, since unseen injustice will not be punished. Now here Socrates is accused of cheating. How could he cheat? There must have been some privacy. Where was that privacy located?

Student: In the mind or in thought.

LS: There may be unjust thoughts which never materialize into unjust actions. Complete communism would dictate only public thought. Without this the communism is incomplete. The real problem, then, is not the communization of women and children but rather the communization of thought. Can thought be collectivized? Some can and some cannot. You remember the words of Lincoln: Some can be fooled all of the time, some some of the time, but not all all of the time. Some people's thoughts can be collectivized by the proper thought control, brainwashing, and what have you. As we shall see this is the real cleavage between the philosophers and the non-philosophers. We are gradually approaching philosophy. This will become clearer as we consider later passages. Socrates admits his attempt at deception. In the sequel, 450c (page 429), there is the first reference to the question of [the] possibility [of the just city]^{xvi} as distinguished from [its] goodness or desirability. This is a crucial point, and it belongs also to the preparation of philosophy. In a way one can say that discovery of the possible is what philosophy is about. In 450d Socrates hesitates to⁶ [discuss] the subject. I believe this is the first time that Socrates hesitates in such a manner. The subject of communism in wives and children is delicate. Glaucon assures Socrates of the fact that they are all reliable. On page 431, line 4, where Shorey translates "distrustful," one can translate with greater accuracy "unreliable."^{xvii} We

^{xv} There is a break in the tape here.

^{xvi} See Strauss, *City and Man*, 122.

^{xvii} The Greek word referred to at 450d3 is *apistoi*.

can say the conspiracy against Socrates becomes a conspiracy in which Socrates participates. In strict privacy they discuss a subject wholly unfit for public discussion—the communism in wives and children. If the citizens of the city would find out about the swindle being practiced with regard to the marriage ceremony, they would not stand for it. Obviously this a matter that must be considered in private. The great difficulty which the noble lie presents, however, comes out much more clearly now than in the earlier book. In 451a (page 431) Socrates is hesitant. He thinks that to deceive regarding noble and just laws is a graver crime than involuntarily to kill someone. The translation is not good at this point. The second line from the bottom should read, “the honorable, the good, and the just *laws*.” What does this mean? To deceive someone regarding such fine institutions is a graver crime than involuntarily to kill someone. Does he speak of voluntary deception or involuntary deception? Or must this apply to both? Involuntary deception is due to ignorance. It should be simply excusable. Or does he mean voluntary deception?

Student: In a sense, it is involuntary. Take the thought that the noble lies are *necessary*. Could they be avoided?

LS: Of course, we can agree that the noble lie is necessary. But the question here is whether he refers to the noble lie or to a discussion of the noble lie among the founding committee. This is a different problem. It is hard to say. Certainly a moral issue arises here. Immediately thereafter Socrates refers to the principle, helping friends and hurting enemies. Deceiving enemies is not so bad. Note the passage 451a to b (page 431 to 433): “This is a risk that it is better to run with enemies than with friends, so that your encouragement is none.”

Then Glaucon laughs. This is the second time that he has laughed.^{xviii} Why does he laugh here? What can be supposed? A certain relaxation of the severe morality has taken place. Socrates's deception or cheating has been discovered. It is much like the Restoration in England (1660), which brought to an end a period of Puritan rule. There is a kind of relief, and the simplest form of relief is laughter. Glaucon enjoys that, just as naughty boys like to laugh on such occasions. Now what do all these things lead to? The equality of the two sexes is suggested, 452a (page 435), and it is pointed out that this would contrast with custom. Thus it would be ridiculous, laughable. But what is against custom? What is against custom is primarily the same as what is immoral. The primarily moral is the customary. We will come back to this later. What shocks custom is very strangely, we find out here, not an object of indignation but of laughter. But under one condition: if it does not threaten the existence of the system, then it is ridiculous.

But let us continue this. In 452c a great act of injustice is committed. The thesis of justice is in that everyone should do his own business. Now the joke makers are strictly forbidden to do their own work. Someone is being hurt in the *Republic*; we do not yet know who it is in a precise way. Then he turns to a discussion of the possibility of the equality of the two sexes. It is admitted that men differ from women by nature; hence their activities should differ. But one must ask whether this natural difference between males and females is relevant politically. Socrates indicates decidedly no. In 454d (page 445) the example of the bald-headed is presented: those who are bald and those who have plenty of hair differ by nature, yet this may not mean that there is a special function for the bald-headed and those who have plenty of hair. The difference between

^{xviii} See Plato *Republic* 398c7.

men and women is of the same caliber. What does he say here? A man and a woman who have a physician's soul have the same nature. From what does he abstract?

Student: There is a definite physical difference.

LS: This is what I have suggested earlier. There is a definite abstraction from the body. You will find additional examples similar to the one you mentioned here in the sixth book. There is a feigned admission that there is some importance to the body by the admission that the female sex is generally weaker. What do we have to say about this equality thesis? In judging of a man, you must not simply consider his speeches but his γ[deeds] as well. For instance, when you simply send out questionnaires you may not get as good a picture as when you are able to see the man and to know something about him and what he does. Now Plato has given us some information that may be of value. What about the women in Plato? Does he give us any examples in his writings? These may be of relevance. But what about women rulers in general, taking into consideration what Plato knew and what we know? Can women rule?

Student: They rule the home.

LS: In a way, but we have examples of women ruling: Queen Elizabeth, Catherine [the Great], and so on. Sure, they can rule. But what about philosophy? If we look at the great names among the rulers we find some women, but we find no great names among the philosophers who were women.

But let us go on. In 456c we find for the first time an interesting development: "Our legislation, then, was not impracticable or utopian, since the law we proposed accorded with nature. Rather, the other way of doing things, prevalent today, proves, as it seems, unnatural." Here Plato makes use of the opposition of nature and law in the ordinary sense. It is slightly concealed again because it is a law according to nature. But the main point is this. The common practice of mankind to maintain a fundamental distinction between the function of women and the function of men is merely conventional. One of the major institutions throughout all history, the family, is destroyed as merely conventional. Perhaps now you understand this air of silence and of conspiracy with which the fifth book begins. This will become still clearer in the sequel.

After a discussion of the possibility of the equality of the sexes, he starts a discussion of its desirability. This is shown through the use of some comical examples. Perhaps these couldn't be avoided here. We have the picture of very old women having gymnastic exercises without any clothing on, and so on. As a sensible man, he says this is all very good, but we must remember that the laughter is not mere nonsense. It pinpoints the difficulty here. In 457b (page 453) we find the principle laid down that the useful is noble and the harmful is base. This is crucial. This is an absolutely iconoclastic assertion. There is nothing noble which cannot be shown to be useful. Plato is not a simple utilitarian, but the kind of dynamite which exists in utilitarianism,⁸ of which we are no longer conscious, exists in Plato too. We can say that the distinction between the noble and the useful corresponds to the distinction between convention and nature. Only that is good which is required by nature; all other things have to be disregarded. What is evidently useful is good. What doesn't have this character can be safely disregarded.

In 457d to e there is a certain exchange that is of some importance for the next paper. What should be discussed first, the communism of women and children from the standpoint of its possibility, or from the standpoint of its desirability? Contrary to the reasonable order, the desirability is discussed first. What this means will come out next time. In 457e Socrates makes another attempt to cheat. Then we come to the real destruction of the family through the device of the communism of wives and children. In this context, 459a (page 459), he points out that the sacred marriages will be those which are most useful. Now we have the introduction of the thought that there is nothing sacred which is not evidently useful. Shortly thereafter, 459c, you find a reference to the fact that the Homeric physicians were rather poor. We had surmised this in an earlier section, but here it is restated. Then we find the use of lies combined with religious ceremonies in order to make the mating arrangements inoffensive. We make tremendous progress in this line since the third book. At that time we had the noble lie, which, while being a lie, was not necessarily offensive. Here it is surrounded by religious ceremonies, which means that religion is used for deception. This is something much more grave than we have seen before. Shorey makes a worthwhile comment here in the note on page 462: "Plato apparently forgets that this legislation applies only to the guardians." How does he know? Because he has made up his mind that the legislation applies only to the guardians. As Aristotle commented a long time ago, it is absolutely unclear whether communism applies only to the soldiers or whether it applies to the common people as well.^{xix} I think it is always right to believe that Aristotle was as intelligent as the scholar of today and to have some faith in his observations. But let us move on.

The picture becomes ever more terrible. In 461e (page 469) incest among brothers and sisters is admitted. Think what this means. It is of course a consequence of this strict rationalism. The purpose of mating is to produce the best offspring. If there is no evidence that mating of brothers and sisters is productive of a poorer offspring, why not? Intercourse between parents and children is forbidden only on the ground that⁹ [this] will lead to a poorer offspring. There is no other ground. In 462a to c we find the statement of the principle of the *Republic*, as Aristotle points out in his criticism, namely, that the goodness of the city consists in the oneness. The more the city is one the better it is. Aristotle remarks that this cannot be true because certain beings cease to be what they are when made more unified than the nature of that being permits.^{xx} Goodness is oneness. This is another point we have to consider when we come to the idea of the good.

In 463d to 464a there is another remark about this subject of the communism of wives and children. The city according to nature is possible only by virtue of law (of convention). This reminds us of Aristophanes's *Assembly of Women*, where you have this city according to nature possible only by these conventional privileges given to the sexually underprivileged. On page 477 [464d] it is pointed out that there should be nothing private except the body. This is really the complete communism. Everything is common except the body. This is again an indirect sign of what I said about the abstraction from the body. The body cannot be collectivized; the mind can be collectivized by deception. Only the thinking mind cannot be collectivized. Thus the distinction between philosophers and non-philosophers is crucial. This much about the desirability of communism. The principle is very simple: complete communism is desirable because it establishes the greatest possible unity. There is no "my wife," "my children," "my

^{xix} Aristotle *Politics* 1264a13-17.

^{xx} Aristotle *Politics* 1261a15-22.

property," and so on. The only thing of which I can claim ownership is my body. Not even my thoughts are *my* thoughts. Consider Soviet Russia: they teach the idea of dialectical materialism; this is not the thought of anyone but rather the public thought of the community. It is worth noting that on the lowest level, the body, and on the highest level, the thinking mind, collectivization is not possible. At the intermediate level is at least imaginable that this collectivization could take place.

This reminds us of a point that I brought up earlier. The highest and the lowest have something in common. This is indicated in various ways, for instance in this passage in 435e. On the highest and lowest levels, collectivization is manifestly impossible. In the intermediate level it is at least imaginable. One could express this in another manner. There is an intermediate sphere in all human things which is not in the same way natural as [are] the highest and the lowest. True thinking follows the natural order as does the body. As a result of this, there are two approaches to the intermediate sphere, from the top and from the bottom. From the top, this will come in books 5 and 6, the conditions of thinking. The moral virtues are required for thinking. From the bottom, the body and its wants, come the habits¹⁰ [man] must develop in order to be a social being. This is another way toward morality. Both must be combined somehow if justice in the city is to be possible. There are two elements which make up the phenomenon of justice. One has to do with the body and the other with the mind. The complexity and the undiscoverability of justice is due to the twofold origin which we see here. This leads to the question: How can there be any unity in the intermediate sphere if this intermediate sphere has a heterogeneous origin? Perhaps we can find an answer as we consider the end of the fifth book next time.

¹ Deleted "the."

² Deleted "the."

³ Deleted "the."

⁴ Deleted "are."

⁵ Deleted "first."

⁶ Deleted "discern."

⁷ Deleted "speech"

⁸ Deleted "if."

⁹ Deleted "his."

¹⁰ Deleted "men."

Session 9: April 30, 1957

Leo Strauss: —[in progress] I liked particularly what you did about seeing, about the eyes and sight.ⁱ These need a media, and Socrates asks Glaucon whether this is true only of sight. Glaucon's affirmative answer neglects what we have seen in another connection: that seeing, smelling, and these other things also require a medium.ⁱⁱ It would have been useful to go on from there in order to see what possible light Glaucon's apparent lack of knowledge about these other things throws on the problem. If he is not aware of the other senses, perhaps he is not properly aware of the sense of sight. It is never sufficient to observe irregularities; one must always find out what this particular act of ignorance indicates. If Socrates makes a gross blunder, it is not only important to realize that this is a blunder, but one must ask why he makes this blunder and why he gets away with it. This brings you into a deeper stratum immediately. In reading a paper on the *Republic*, moreover, one should always have a piece of paper in front of him, or perhaps the equivalent of a piece of paper, on which you write in capital letters the word justice. Every theme in the *Republic* can only be understood properly if you realize its connection with the problem of justice.

There is one point which occurred to me while you spoke. This regards the fourth part of the line which you called conjecture or picture thinking.ⁱⁱⁱ I have now a translation of that: fancy. Take fancy in the older sense, fancy or imagination as distinguished from seeing. Hobbes used it very frequently in this sense. Moreover, when you conjecture, you say "I fancy." I think this would be the better translation for that. But now let us turn to a discussion of your assignment. The subject matter is very difficult and presupposes an understanding of the doctrine of ideas as a whole. By this I mean this simple thing on which we got into troubles, that Plato introduces the whole discussion by saying that what is is intelligible.^{iv} Then he goes on to say that *everything* that is is intelligible. We have not discussed this point, although it is really the basis of the whole thing. Let me propose that we discuss today's assignment as well as we can, and then devote the next session to a consideration of this basic problem.

Let us begin with the context. The philosophers must become kings, and the kings philosophers.^v We have seen last time that the fundamental difficulty is the disproportion or even incompatibility between the pursuit of philosophy and the acquisition of political experience. This fact, the fact that if you devote yourself to these unchangeable things and devote your whole attention to them—you simply won't have the time to find out how to manipulate people and so on. This being the case, the philosophers are quite reasonably not accepted as the rulers. They have given no evidence that they might rule well. This leads us to the modified version found at the end of the last assignment. The only solution is not that the philosophers become kings but that kings or sons of kings, those who have already power and some political know-how, become philosophers.^{vi} This subject is continued into today's section. We should never forget, however,

ⁱ The session began with the reading of a student's paper. The reading was not recorded.

ⁱⁱ Plato *Republic* 507b5-509b10.

ⁱⁱⁱ 509d1-511e5.

^{iv} 476c2-480a13.

^v 473c11-e5.

^{vi} 499a11-c5.

the pedestrian context in which these high themes are being discussed. The philosopher becomes qualified for rule by knowledge of the good, which is the highest peak of learning. One should hesitate in adopting Shorey's suggestion that this is merely the highest ethical problem. The distinction doesn't exist in Plato, and one can say that this is *the* highest theme simply.^{vii} To elucidate what this absolutely mysterious thing, the idea of the good, means, Socrates uses among other things the simile of the cave.^{viii} For the understanding of this simile, it is imperative that we realize one point or one element of it. We must understand that the cave is the city. It is more than the city, but it is primarily and very obviously the city. One can see this by reading the text and noting the course of discussion. The simile of the cave makes clearer than anything else in the book, and perhaps than any other Platonic dialogue, the disproportion between philosophy and the city. Thus it presents the problem of the rule of the philosopher in its most extreme form. Cavemen and men living under the sun: this is the difference between the mass of men and the philosophers.

There are three passages of special interest regarding this problem to which we may turn first, before we turn to a more coherent discussion of the entire problem. In 517c (page 131) he speaks about the philosophers and their relation to the city again: "Do not be surprised that those who have attained to this height are not willing to occupy themselves with the affairs of man, but their souls ever feel the upward urge and the yearning for the world above."

This shows that the philosophers are not *willing* to go into politics; therefore they can never acquire the political experience. You may remember the problem of last time. Now let us turn to the second of the passages. In 519c (page 139). Here it is pointed out that the philosophers will not voluntarily engage in action. Literally, they will not voluntarily act. The philosophers are perfectly satisfied in their work or their business. If a person is perfectly satisfied, unless he is a fool who simply wants change for the sake of change, he will not change. This is impossible here, however, because no one can become bored by philosophy.

The last passage is 521b (page 145): "Can you tell any other way of life which despises political rule except the way of life of genuine or true philosophy?" At this stage, then, we have the point which we saw last time presented very clearly. This greatness of bearing which is essential to the philosopher is the ultimate reason why the philosopher does not wish to acquire political experience. Thus he remains totally unfit for political rule unless he is compelled to acquire that experience.

But let us return to the simile of the cave, because that illustration deals with this particular problem. We may say that there is a radical disproportion between the polis and philosophy. The conflict can be solved only if the philosophers can be *compelled* to descend into the cave of political life and to take care of the cave's business. This is clear. The success of this rule however, the rule of the men of the cave by men from outside the cave, depends on the philosophers having completed the task of philosophy. The completion of the task of philosophy is said by Plato to have seen the good. In 520c (page 143) Socrates addresses Glaucon and the others present as those who will rule in the future as philosophers. What does he mean? Glaucon and these others will engage in philosophic studies. They will complete the work of philosophy.

^{vii} 502c9-50910.

^{viii} 514a1-521b11.

At that time, not before, they will return to rule.

We ignore the problem of how they will get the political power in our discussions at this point, although this is not a completely negligible problem. But let us now look only at the intrinsic problem: the completion of the task of the philosopher. Socrates anticipates that a crowd of young men will be completed philosophers, that is, no longer philosophers proper but truly wise men. Socrates cannot speak in this vein. He has seen the idea of the good only dimly. Here however he anticipates the completion of philosophy within the next generation. He says, 517b to c, that the idea of the good, without which all other knowledge is useless, can barely be seen. Is such a bare grasp sufficient? In an entirely hypothetical and tentative way I suggest the following conclusion: it is not sufficient. If full knowledge of the idea of the good as it would be needed is not available, then the rule of philosophy will not be possible. Aside from the great problem of philosophers and rule, there is the intrinsic problem of the incompleteness of philosophy. If this is so, the conflict between the city and philosophy cannot be resolved.

Let me state it a little differently. Everyone calls the *Republic* a utopia. Utopia is a word of many meanings, but if we understand by utopia a political proposal which is impossible, then it can be said that the *Republic* is a utopia in this sense too. This will become clearer as we go along, although we have seen something of this thoughtⁱ last time. The beauty of the *Republic* is this: the *Republic* is not only a political utopia but at the same time a philosophical utopia. The underlying connection, and this is the deeper unity of the *Republic*, may be seen in the following manner. It is clear that the *Republic* is a utopia when approached from the standpoint of common sense. Think only of the inadequate discussion of the equality of the two sexes. There Socrates has the nerve to compare the relation of males and females to men who are bald-headed and those who are not bald-headed.^{ix} This is certainly an atrocious minimizing of fundamental differences. The beauty of the *Republic* is that it presents a political utopia which is impossible because the philosophic utopia is impossible. I think this is the deepest nerve of the argument of the *Republic*. First we have the political utopia, that which our hearts or our consciences desire. Then we see that this in itself requires philosophy, but not simply philosophy; it requires the completion of philosophy. What the completion of philosophy would mean is sketched. Then it is suggested to us that this completion is impossible. Thus this description of what philosophy in its perfection would be is utopian. Therefore, the political utopia is a utopia.

But let us not stray too far from the theme of the *Republic*. The theme is justice. How does this discussion contribute to this theme?

Student: When you suggest that the *Republic* cannot be realized, do you mean this even in terms of chance? Is it absolutely impossible?

LS: This is difficult to say. The present book is extremely rich and with many layers. Let us remember that the *Republic* gives us a sketch of a utopia in a reasonable context. It only applies this unreasonably. The reasonable thing is the question of the best political order or the best regime. The outlines of this question are stated with perfect clarity here: The problem of how possibility and desirability combine and how the realization depends on conditions essentially not under our control, on chance. If you want to see Plato's serious utopia, then one has to turn to

^{ix} 454c1-455a4.

the *Laws*. But here one must remember that even this regime depends on chance. One must get these conditions—an island and so on.

But let me come back to this other question. The theme of the *Republic* is justice. How do these other problems affect the problem of justice? Last time it was made clear to us that there is a fundamental ambiguity about justice. The justice of the farmer, shoemaker, or even the soldier is not the same as that of the philosopher. They look alike; both do their own business, but this is only an external identification. The spirit which animates the justice of the philosopher is entirely different from that which animates the soldiers or lower classes. There are at least three types of justice. Let me distinguish, as Plato does, between the genuine justice and vulgar or political justice. The same distinction applies to all other virtues.

Let us consider the questions raised by the life of the philosopher. The desire of the philosopher as philosopher is directed toward the contemplation of *the* truth. He finds his satisfaction in this contemplation or quest. Of course he needs other people in this quest. He must have people to whom he can talk about these things. As for the concern with others who are not concerned with the truth, that is for him only a nuisance. This cannot be compared with the intrinsic character of the quest. As is now made clear in 520b (page 141), Glaucon suggests that we may do injustice to the philosophers in making them take care of the sewage and this kind of thing. Socrates indicates there is no injustice, because the city made it possible for them to become philosophers. They only repay this investment. But what is the situation in the cities as they are at present? In the cities as they are now the philosophers owe absolutely nothing. They grow up spontaneously and not as a result of any volition of the government in the several cities. As a result of this, they owe their gifts to nature rather than to the *polis*. It is justice, then, that the self-grown, indebted to none for its breeding, should not be zealous to pay to anyone the price of its nurture. In the cities as they are now, there is no obligation of the philosopher to the *polis*. This is meant by the ambiguous passage we read last time or the time before, that which indicated the philosophers are not subject to the city. While they are physically subject, that is not a just subjection. The philosophers as philosophers owe nothing to the city.

I think we might pause a bit and note that there is a somewhat different understanding expressed in the *Crito*.^x This should lead us to be cautious. It should be recalled that in this other work the fact that Socrates is a philosopher is wholly disregarded. It also shows that we must not believe that this analysis of the philosopher in the *Republic* is complete. The points coming up in the *Crito* have to be considered also. Every dialogue abstracts from something. The understanding of the dialogue means to understand [that] from which² [it] abstracts. The *Republic* abstracts fundamentally from the body. We must remember that Plato was not such a fool [as] to ignore the fact that the existence of philosophy on earth depends absolutely on the *polis* and thus on what kind of *polis* it is. Plato certainly knew that the philosopher owes a duty of loyalty to the *polis*. Philosophy depends on the *polis*. Everyone can see this today if he compares the Western world with Soviet Russia. But there is a certain deeper problem which must not be blurred by this almost matter of course moral obligation. There is something in philosophy which can never be understood in terms of that moral obligation.

There are two passages in today's assignment which bear immediately on the problem of

^x See *Crito* 50c4-51c4.

philosophy and the *polis* in their conflict. The first is in 503c to d (page 81). Here Socrates recapitulates some of the qualities which the philosopher essentially needs: "They will naturally be few, for the different components of the nature which we said their education presupposed rarely consent to grow in them. For the most part these qualities are found apart." This is not properly translated. It might better be "grow" apart. Growth and nature are in Greek the same word.^{xi} We have this nature of the philosopher.

These natural parts do not come together most of the time. These natural parts have a tendency to move away from each other. Thus philosophers are very rare. In the immediate sequel we see that there is an especially close connection between the highest intellectual gifts which philosophy requires and spiritedness as distinguished from moderation. The philosophic nature has a greater kinship to spiritedness than to moderation. This is also shown the other way around. These men who are by nature moderate are not easily aroused, they learn only with difficulty, and they are filled with sleep and yawning when an intellectual task is set before them.

Before going on, however, let us look at Shorey's note here (page 81): "Plato's contrast of the two temperaments disregards the possible objection of the psychologist that the adventurous temperament is not necessarily intellectual." What would he say to that? Do you need a psychologist to say that? Would Plato be ignorant of this very elementary fact that there are sometimes very boisterous and extroverted characters who are completely unable to think even for a moment? What Shorey did not see is that Socrates illustrates here precisely what he means. The context here is the change from Adeimantus to Glaucon. Note what Adeimantus says on the bottom of page 83. They speak about the length of the discussion. Socrates is not satisfied with the previous discussion. Adeimantus suggests that it was satisfactory to him in his capacity as a moderate man. Socrates insists, however (page 84), that the discussion fell short of its goal and thus was not adequate.^{xii}

Now if you would turn to 450b (page 429, volume 1), you will see that Thrasymachus is asking whether Socrates supposes that the company has gathered together in order that it might prospect for gold rather than to listen to discussion. Glaucon breaks in; "Nay, Socrates, the measure of listening to such discussion is the whole of life for reasonable men." Do you see this? Glaucon is intemperate and spirited; Adeimantus is temperate. The fact that Socrates takes over in the sixth book a statement that was made in the fifth book by Glaucon is the key to the whole situation. Shorey's comment here is wholly irrelevant. Naturally there are many complete fools who are spirited. The point is whether intellectuality proper does not have an essential harmony with spiritedness rather than with quietness and lack of daring. The problem might be stated in this fashion. There is a certain tension between this intelligence and spiritedness on the one hand and certain other moral qualities. There is no essential connection between the philosophic concern and the concern for others as others. If the others are potential philosophers, the concern is then obvious. But the relation to non-philosophers poses a far different problem. Let us consider a further passage, 518d to e (page 135) on this theme. "The other so-called virtues of the soul do seem akin to those of the body, for it is true that where they do not preexist, they are afterwards created by habit and practice. But the excellence of thought it seems is certainly of a more divine quality, a thing that never loses its potency but according to the direction of its conversion

^{xi} The Greek word at 503b10 is *phuetai*.

^{xii} *Republic* 504b8-c4.

becomes useful and beneficent.”

What Socrates says here is that there is only one genuine virtue. In a certain sense this may be used as practical wisdom, although Socrates uses the word in the sense of all wisdom. This has a radically different character from the other virtues. They are called “so-called virtues” in this passage. They lack the genuine character which the perfection of the mind possesses. Moreover, they are acquired only by habit and practice and not by learning and understanding. This is another indication of the great problem of philosophy and justice or philosophy and morality as we would say.

We must now turn to what is the most difficult subject of today's assignment, and I am by no means certain that I can be of real help here. This concerns the discussion of the idea of the good. My previous remarks have been directed to ensuring that we never forget that even in this highest part of the *Republic* the crude, massive issue remains that of justice. We have to constantly think of the relation of justice and philosophy. In the scheme of the *Republic*, moreover, the possibility of the rule of philosophers is present and must not be minimized. Still, we cannot simply slip around the idea of the good as a cat would slip around hot milk. Why does he speak of an idea of the good? Just as the earlier ideas were more or less thrown into the midst of the discussion without an adequate argument leading up to them, so here the same thing happens regarding the idea of the good. Why an idea of the good? I think we would be faced with an infinite problem if we did not make one presupposition at this point. This is dangerous and we will try to remedy that next time. The whole discussion of the idea of the good presupposes one thing: that only ideas are truly and thus that only ideas can be truly known. This is presupposed here. Whether this is right or wrong we do not know. How do we come from the ideas generally, if they are and if we know what they are, to the idea of the good? I will try to explain this as well as I can.

The ideas are noetic and can be grasped only by the mind or intellect. Let us assume for one moment that the ideas are noetic atoms, i.e., they cannot be divided anymore. You cannot divide the idea of man without destroying the essential meaning. As atoms, these noetic ideas are infinite in number. Since the infinite cannot be comprehended we may say that the ideas are not susceptible of being comprehended or understood. How did the ordinary atomism, say of Democritus, solve this problem? He did what a sensible man would do. He said there are kinds of atoms, and these kinds are finite; there are smooth ones and so on. With the introduction of the idea of a finite number it became possible to comprehend the totality. Let us apply this to Plato. There must be an equivalent to kinds of ideas if the ideas are to be understood. Let me take the crudest possible understanding and offer as an example the idea of the undersecretary of the Ladies' Garment Workers Union. This is the thought that Shorey shares with a number of others. There is supposedly an idea corresponding to every noun which is not a proper name. This introduces the thought of infinity. The only way in which there could be a knowledge of ideas would be if there were kinds of ideas. If there are kinds, however, then there is an order. This is the problem raised by Thrasy Machus in the first book. There is a hierarchy of ideas, and this requires that there be a first idea. If the ideas are to be knowable, there must be a first idea.

But let us return to the idea of ordinary atomism. There are atoms and kinds of atoms. The question arises: Why are there these and these kinds of atoms and not others? The answer given by the atomist is that the phenomena from which we ascend to the atoms require only these and

these kinds of atoms for their explanation and no other kind of atoms. But is this true knowledge of the atoms? Is it adequate to establish by inferential reasoning that there are only these and these kinds of atoms required for an understanding of the phenomenon which we observe? Plato says no. If we speak of atomism a true knowledge would require something more. If we could know that there *can* be only these and these kinds of atoms and necessarily only these, then our knowledge would be true knowledge. Take an example that is a little more familiar to us: the division of regimes as you find it in Plato and Aristotle. That there are these six regimes, the three good and the three bad, is absolutely necessary; there cannot be anything else unless it is a mixture or a combination. True knowledge is knowledge of necessity rather than simply knowledge of fact.

Let us apply this to the ideas. The ideas would be truly knowable only if we could descend from the first idea via ideas, thus absorbing the whole realm of ideas. This would be perfect knowledge. One could say, for example, that Hegel's *Logic* demanded a priori such a base; no empirical, no uncertain or changeable thing enters here. This knowledge is absolutely certain and at the same time complete or exhaustive. We shall say then that the first idea is the ground and origin of all ideas. In this context, I would like to say a special word about the passage running from 506e to 507a, where Socrates uses the simile of the sun as the offspring of the good. Then Glaucon speaks of the idea of the good as the father of the sun. Socrates does not adopt the term father. What corresponds to interest as distinguished from offspring proper?

Student: Principal or capital.

LS: Now the Greek word for this means primarily starting point and origin. Every father is an origin or an originator, but not every origin is a father. To return to this other thought. We shall say that this first idea is the ground or origin of all ideas. Now let us take another problem. The ideas are the object of intellection, if I may use that term rather than knowledge here. But is it an accident that we can see, with our mind's eye, ideas? Is this an accident, or is there not an essential reason for that? Intelligibility would be an accident if it were not essentially necessary. If the whole is to be intelligible, there must be an intelligible reason why there is such a harmony between the mind and the objects of the mind. In other words, there must be a bond between the mind and the ideas. This bond cannot be simply an idea, because it is a bond between the ideas as a whole and the mind. What follows from that? I think it is what Socrates literally says. The first idea, as the ground of both ideas and knowledge of ideas, is beyond the ideas. But since idea means to be true being, the first idea must be beyond true being.^{xiii} This gets somewhat deeper now. We are now making a little exercise in what Plato called arguing on the basis of premises the truth or clarity of which is not yet established. We have to do that from time to time, and perhaps we may say that one learns something by it.

Let us proceed to the next step. The ideas are meant as the ground or cause of the things which come into being and perish. If that is true of the ideas, it must be equally true of the first idea. The first idea must be the ground not only of all ideas but of everything, of things which come into being and perish. One more point. We see that given Plato's premise, there is a necessity of arriving at a first idea which is not simply an idea. This explains an ambiguity which must have struck you. Socrates constantly shifts from speaking of the idea of the good and the good, in the

^{xiii} 509b6-10.

latter case omitting the idea. This is essential and not simply an accident. Still we have to answer one question: Why is the first idea, that which is beyond ideas and not simply an idea, called the good? We have not answered that question. Assuming that our argument is conclusive, that the existence of ideas leads to a first idea which is beyond ideas and no longer merely an idea, why do we call it or should we call it the good? Calling it [this] means that we have divined that it is *the* good. What leads to that? Why should a principle of universal fertility be called good? Is this not a dogmatic premise? Well, there is a famous passage, perhaps the most famous passage in Plato apart from that of the philosopher king, in the *Phaedo*, where the dying or almost dying Socrates tells the history of his philosophic inquiries and his break with earlier philosophy.^{xiv} While I cannot recapitulate all the material on these several pages, let me mention what is for our purposes indispensable. In so many words Socrates suggests that only an explanation by an end can be a satisfactory explanation: If you know that these and these things happen in this way by virtue of causal necessity, as people say today, you are not completely satisfied. It could be different; this and this just happens to be the law governing motion or what have you. The doubt still remains. The doubt is dispelled only if you see that something is necessarily so because it is reasonably so. This is a teleological explanation.

The postulate of intelligibility from which we started in our discussion of the ideas finds its necessary conclusion in the notion of a first idea which is not simply an idea and which is the good or the idea of the good. You can call this both ways without making an error. Let me summarize this point. The intelligibility of the whole—the premise of philosophy—requires the idea of the good. The question we shall turn to next time remains: What about this premise of philosophy, the intelligibility of the whole? Is this not a dogmatic premise? In view of our understanding, should it not be replaced by another and more adequate one? This is a problem. My reference to Hegel in this context was deliberate, because Hegel was *the* man who really executed that program of a movement from a first idea through ideas and ideas alone, eventually exhausting the realm of ideas. This is the significant aspect of Hegel's work. Plato didn't do this, but instead wrote dialogues. Is this an accident or is there some reason behind it? Did Plato refrain from doing that out of weakness, yawning, and so on, or did he do it deliberately? We get one inkling in our assignment, 517b to c. Here it is pointed out that the idea of the good is barely seen. Let us assume that this means not merely an accident which happened to Socrates so that his eyes were not good enough, but that there was some necessity for that. What would follow from that? If the first idea, the origin of everything, cannot be really seen but only dimly, what follows from that for our whole notion of philosophy?

To come back to the passage we discussed during the meeting before last, what happens to the assertion that being and intelligibility are co-extensive? This must be revised, but not on the basis of certain discoveries made by modern man. Plato simply did not mean it this way. He did not mean the full intelligibility that it seems to indicate. The practical conclusion—that if there is no full intelligibility of the idea of the good there can be no rule of philosophers—we can disregard at the moment. What we are doing at the present time is really more serious. Let us argue from the following assumption or the assumption we have been considering here, the assumption which I believe to be the key to the whole passage here. If the idea of the good is not fully and adequately accessible to man and all knowledge remains problematic or questionable, then I would say that we are at a loss. What becomes of philosophy, or what becomes of human life?

^{xiv} *Phaedo* 95e7-102a1.

What would be the strict consequence if there is no adequate or no real knowledge of the idea of the good? I suggest there would be no knowledge altogether except in very limited and uninteresting areas. The shoemaker has perfect knowledge, but only on the basis of certain assumptions, i.e., that protection of the feet is desirable. Even mathematics rests on certain assumptions. This knowledge would be surrounded by mystery. The substance of reality would be mysterious, not intelligible. Plato has a very sober term for the alternative to knowledge. What is his term?

Student: Opinion.

LS: Certainly. If the idea of the good is not truly knowable, then we cannot transcend opinion. I think this what Plato really means. But there are differences between opinions and opinions. Let us now turn to the question of opinions.

Student: What is the status of our knowing that the idea of the good is not knowable? Is this opinion or real knowledge?

LS: It would be knowledge, but knowledge of what? Of ignorance? I think so, and knowledge of ignorance is a famous formula stemming from Plato. We have found a definition of opinion in the fifth book. *Doxa* is directed toward what is between being and not being. This formula was replaced at the beginning of the sixth book by the suggestion that opinion is directed toward becoming as distinguished from being.^{xv}

Now we turn to the three similes. I feel that the thought or bond which keeps them together is the question regarding the status of opinion. There are three similes here: the sun, the divided line, and the simile of the cave. All three similes have in common this other character, that they all have the form of proportions. Let us look at these proportions and see what we can learn from them. The first:

Sun-light is to color-sight = the good is to ideas and intellection

The sun is related to light here as the originator of light. Color here corresponds to the ideas and sight to intellection. It would appear perfectly clear as it stands, but it is not so clear as we see from the sequel. Here Socrates makes the following suggestion:

Sun-light is to *becoming things*-sight = the good is to *being* and intellection

You see what he does: he replaces the ideas by being. Given all the premises this is no problem. But it is something else again that he replaces colors by becoming. Let me consider this point in a little more detail. The sun sends light and this light makes possible the seeing of color and the being of color. It actualizes the colors as colors and seeing as seeing. Similarly, the idea of the good actualizes the ideas and the perception of the ideas. Now what does this mean? In the context, it means that the becoming things are identified with the objects of sight. The becoming things are the objects of sight. You can enlarge this and say the objects of sense perception; this wouldn't affect the thing a bit. Do you see what has happened? What was originally said to be an

^{xv} *Republic* 478b3-d12, 484a1-485b3. The tape was changed at this point.

object of opinion is now said to be the object of sense perception. It would appear from the first proportion that opinion and sense perception are different. Common sense would tell us this. In this connection there is said in 508c to d that opinion is not sense perception at all. Opinion is a blurred vision of the idea. It is a blurred vision of what does not come into being itself. Opinion is different from sense perception in such a way that opinion is higher. Every brute has sense perception. Opinion in any significant sense is something quite different.

Now we can come to the second proportion, that of the divided line. Let me offer several terms here: fancy, opinion, reason, and intellect. Fancy means the perception of the reflection of visible things, e.g., in a mirror, in water, and so on. The second is sense perception proper, the seeing of [the] visible things. The third, of which the most important although not the only example is mathematics, is reasoning. The political scientist who would study political matters on the basis of a crude, vague notion of what constitutes civil society is of course as much a reasoner as a mathematician. He does not go up and ask why civil society is of this and this nature, or why are there essentially these and these kinds of civil societies. If he does that, then he philosophizes already. What they call the empirical political scientist is one who does not reflect on the premises but goes down from the premises to conclusions. Intellection, the last of the four, is a concern with the premises themselves, and one which ultimately leads to a concern with the idea of the good. Let me make one point very clear here. In this section, it is said by Glaucon (511a) that opinion is equal to sense perception. Socrates says something on this point in 510a to end, but I am unable to interpret this for you and leave it to your consideration. To repeat: the central proportion suggests that the best kind of opinion is sense perception. This in turn is called by the strange and wholly unexplained term "belief."

Let us now turn to the third proportion. This indicates:

the cave is to the visible world = the visible world is to the ideas or the intelligible

This is the only proportion in which the middle members are the same. Now let us look at this third proportion. Where is opinion located according to this third proportion? In the cave! Here it is lower than sense perception. Here we have again a return to the thesis of the first proportion—that opinion is different from sense perception. But here we have a change. In the first proportion, opinion was said to differ from sense perception by being higher than sense perception. Now we are told opinion is different from sense perception by being lower than sense perception. I have not given you a hundredth of the difficulties of these three similes. This is an extremely difficult series of passages. Moreover, and this is of some significance, the text is not quite certain in crucial passages.

Let me suggest with all possible reservations the following conclusion. Let us start from the last simile, that of the cave. The non-philosophic life is described as the cave life. But what does the cave stand for? The cave means the world as we all know it. You can say, and this is the explanation Socrates gives later on, that the cave stands for the visible universe, including man. But this is not quite correct, because if you look at the example you see that the cave is characterized by the absence of any natural beings except human beings. There are human beings in the cave but nothing else. They see the shadows of themselves and they see the shadows of

certain artifacts. No plants or animals are there.^{xvi} The cave is both the sensible world and at the same time a world of the utmost artificiality. How can we understand this? What do we mean by sense perception? As our first point, there is never pure sense perception. When we say that we see a tree, we already make involuntary use of all the possible connotations of the term "tree," as well as a certain vague understanding of the word "tree," and so on. You offer an interpretation as soon as you call it a tree. Of course you are right, but you really do not know what you are doing or saying.

There is never pure sense perception; sense perception is always interpreted. There is always a frame of reference in which the things seen become of significance. We must keep this fact in mind. The sense data are always interpreted in an overall way, in a coherent overall way. They are primarily interpreted by such creatures in the light of what these creatures do. What they see are some artifacts carried around by some beings which are never seen. The interpretation of the sense data is primarily an interpretation based on certain venerable premises which serve as the basis of society. The arbitrary character of these premises can be recognized. For example, there is an interpretation *x* pervading in one society³ [while] interpretation *y* is favored in a second society. By realizing its arbitrary and relative character you are enabled to have recourse to the non-arbitrary. Heaven knows how many different mores and what have you exist among the different tribes, but you can always reach an understanding after a very short while that a particular tree is green and not some other color, unless color-blindness exists, with anyone. So we reach something that is not arbitrary, something which is accessible to all men as men equally. It is in a way independent of the variety of interpretation. But what is the status of that which no one can help admitting? This is something no one can help admitting without talking nonsense. If, for example, one would say there is no such thing as motion, even if he had a perfectly wonderful argument no one would believe him. This non-arbitrary, basic stratum which we cannot help admitting, however, is not understood.

For example, when I indicate this is a tree I still leave the possibility open that there might be a universe without trees. How do I know? So I am compelled to admit and yet I do not understand this necessity. This is what Plato means by belief. There is really a non-arbitrary starting point of which man can become aware. Philosophy would consist in the ascent from what we cannot help admitting, from the purely factual, to the cause or the ground of that. This ascent is accompanied, in the absence of perfect wisdom or knowledge, by the awareness of the darkness, obscurity, and fragmentary character of what we realize. Thus it is no longer pure opinion, but rather knowledge of ignorance. I believe this is one of the crucial points that Plato is attempting to make here, although it is also clear that this explanation does not exhaust the possibilities. One could easily go into an infinite variety of other points. I wished to make this one point, however, because the simile of the cave may be easily misunderstood.

Next time we will have no paper but rather a discussion of the foundation on which the good or the idea of the good is erected. Before concluding, however, perhaps there are some questions.

Student: Could you offer a few more words on the proportions that you see developed in the three similes?

^{xvi} 514a1-515c2.

LS: I think that if one says there are three similes and that each simile takes the form of a proportion, he is on fairly safe ground. But there are questions beyond this. Why does Plato give two shockingly different interpretations in the first and third simile? The crucial difference is that colors, the true objects of sight as sight, are later replaced by something quite different. I call your attention also to the changing status of opinion. In this connection let us not lose sight of the overall problem. The distinction between knowledge and opinion is considered in a limited way in the *Timaeus*. All these distinctions, however, become problematic if the basis of these various sciences or fields of investigation are obscure. The area of knowledge yielded by these various approaches is surrounded by perhaps a much larger area of mystery. With this in mind, how can we really speak of knowledge in the strict sense of the word? The task is to elaborate the notion of the truly universal knowledge, knowledge which goes to the ground of everything. This is what Plato does in speaking of the idea of the good. Then he indicates, however, by his remarks in connection with the idea of the good that this completion of knowledge is impossible. This leads to the conclusion that in the very strict sense we never come beyond opinion. You must understand the critical difference here. It is one thing to say Mr. X is such and such; it is something quite different to say you know Mr. X is this because you have seen it. The question remains, however, whether despite this difference between thinking and seeing one has gone to the root of the problem. How far does this knowledge which rests on sight go? This is the question we will attempt to discuss next time. It might be said that all human knowledge ultimately has the character of opinion in that sense that we cannot give a perfectly lucid account of its premises. We must raise the question, then: What is opinion? Must opinion have not only a variety of meanings, an unexpected variety of meanings, if even the highest forms of human knowledge are ultimately to be described as opinions? I think this is the context in which one has to look at the three proportions. But perhaps this will become clearer next time.

¹ Deleted "we have seen something of this thought."

² Deleted "that."

³ Deleted "which."

Session 10: May 2, 1957

Leo Strauss: —[in progress] [It] will become clearer as we go along that the rule of philosophers is impossible. But the good society is directed toward the true end of man, toward what is truly good, toward that which is *known* to be truly good. Such knowledge is the objective of philosophy. Thus society must be guided by philosophers if not directly ruled by philosophers. It must be inspired by philosophy. Take the United States Constitution as an example, and consider its relation to the *Federalist*. Indirectly we have a relation to the French philosopher Montesquieu. One could say this is an empirical fact and still suggest, however, that Montesquieu in his turn was dependent on the British constitution. He analyzed this in the *Spirit of the Laws* and this analysis is in a way the starting point for the *Federalist*.ⁱ The British constitution is admittedly not the work of philosophy but of absent-mindedness. I say this with all due respect to the British constitution, and call to your attention that fact that this observation was made much earlier by one of its greatest admirers, Edmund Burke.ⁱⁱ Society is guided by philosophy, which in its turn is guided by the experiences of society. But what enabled Montesquieu to choose the British constitution as his model? After all, he was not a Britisher but a Frenchman. Why did he select the British constitution as a model? There was nothing particularly British in Montesquieu. In other words, what enabled Montesquieu to make this choice were universal principles rather than British principles regarding the true end of society. Looking at all constitutions of which he was aware in the light of this universal principle, he felt that the British was the best. If one looks a bit more closely at what Montesquieu has done, he comes back to the same principle: that the true end of society must be known, and this knowledge in any precise sense of the term is the work of philosophy. Every thought becomes trivial if one is not aware of the alternative and if one does not take the alternative seriously. What is the alternative to the rule of philosophy? It is obvious in Plato. The politicians and even the greatest statesmen never are the ultimate rulers.

Student: Poetry.

LS: Poetry is the alternative. Homer, the educator of Greece and thus the educator of anyone doing anything in Greece, is a case in point.ⁱⁱⁱ You could compare this to the role of Shakespeare in the Anglo-Saxon world. But why is poetry not a genuine alternative to philosophy? Take the simplest level. Let us take these two examples and perhaps add Dante for good measure. We have these different poets, all educators of their nations, yet that with which they inspire their nations is not identical. The message of Homer is not the same as that of Dante. There is a disagreement between the poets. This disagreement cannot possibly be solved poetically. If there were a fourth poet, for example, he could not solve this as a poet. The very idea of a solution of such difficulties goes beyond poetry and leads to philosophy. Poetry, while most visible in Plato as the alternative to philosophy, cannot ultimately raise this claim.

In the West there has always been the alternative of the biblical revelation. While all kinds of

ⁱ See Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, book 11, chapter 6; *Federalist* # 47.

ⁱⁱ See Strauss's discussion of this point in *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 313-314.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Plato *Republic* 606e1-607a5.

accommodations are possible between philosophy and biblical revelation, ultimately there is a clash. Either philosophy becomes the handmaid of theology or theology becomes the handmaid of philosophy. No one has ever been able to avoid that difficulty. To understand that clash one must understand the characteristic difference between philosophy and revelation. Here we are almost at the point at which we have to begin, because this alternative cannot be stated more simply than it is stated by Plato in the passage in the fifth book which we want to discuss. He suggests that to be means to be intelligible. Thus to be in the most perfect way means to be perfectly intelligible.^{iv} The ground of everything is lucid. The difference between this and the Bible is obvious. There we have the hidden gods. God asserts that He will dwell in mist (cf. the prayer of Solomon)^v, or as in the passage to Moses: "I shall be Him who I shall be."^{vi} You cannot predict. You have no formula. In order to state it simply, we may say that the ground of everything is mysterious. Revelation can legitimately say that its contention does not require proof. It is of the essence of revelation not to be capable of being proven.

Philosophy, however, must prove its contentions. The contention of philosophy is that philosophy is possible. Philosophy means or is the attempt to replace opinions about this whole with knowledge of the whole. Is this attempt not absurd? The attempt of philosophy presupposes that the whole is intelligible and that the whole *is*. Let us assume that the whole is becoming, say expanding, in such a way that the future of the whole depends on free acts of man. These are unpredictable. Then there is no whole. Certainly the first part of the statement, that philosophy presupposes the whole is intelligible, is essential if philosophy is to be possible. Our question is clear: How does Plato try to establish the basic premise of philosophy? Maybe this basic premise of philosophy has to be reformulated in accordance with what Plato actually does. In the crucial passage, it is said only what is can be known. Moreover, it is clear that what is not cannot be known. This is the beginning.

Let us take the example of the unicorn, the example used in an earlier paper, at this point. The unicorn *is* in a way. For example, if ⁱ[we] say "abracadabra" is not "pushy-wushy," this is true in a very literal sense. Phonetically they are different. On the other hand, because we understand nothing by either of them they are of no real significance to us. We can leave the question to some logician. But if we suggest the unicorn is real, then we have made a meaningful assertion. If we say it is not something else, we can say that it *is* in a sense. But there is a qualification. Let us assume that someone comes forth and writes an article in a scholarly or non-scholarly magazine in which he asserts that there are also yellow and black unicorns, contrary to the prevailing notion that there are only white ones. We see that both this novel assertion—that there are yellow unicorns—and its current denial have the same basis. We cannot know whether the unicorn is yellow or white because the unicorn *is not*. Knowledge necessarily depends on what *is*. It consists in grasping what is as it is. That which *is not* cannot be grasped. So the unicorn is not and thus cannot be known. The difficulty is due to the fact that we have some folklore about unicorns. We can know something about that. That folklore *is*. That folklore can be known and there can be a reasonable and serious discussion on whether folklore admits or does not admit a yellow or black unicorn. But whether the unicorn itself is yellow or black is not a reasonable question, because the unicorn for all we know *is not*.

^{iv} 477a2-4, 478b3-4.

^v *1 Kings* 8:12.

^{vi} *Exodus* 3:14.

If Plato says only what *is* can be known as what *is not* cannot be known, then this makes sense. It is not too difficult. But he goes much beyond that. He says not only what *is* can be known, but also that everything that *is* can be known. The consequence is that the more perfectly something is the more perfectly it can be known. If there is something which *is* perfectly (or utterly, as Shorey translates it), then it is perfectly or utterly knowable. The question is: How does Plato establish this point? Only being and every being is knowable. This can only be understood if we think of the corollary, i.e., what is becoming or perishable is not knowable in the strict sense. The difficulty arises from the fact that Socrates does not speak of the difference between being and becoming in the fifth book but only at the beginning of the sixth.^{vii}

Now let us take an old example. It has been restated very powerfully by Hegel, but it is much older than Hegel. In honor of Hegel, I have to say that the example I am now going to use is not used by Hegel. It is much too crude for him and for any writer. Let us take an everyday example. At this very minute, someone is wiping his nose. Let us say X, in order to avoid ridiculing anyone, is now wiping his nose. Nothing could be truer. Since it is true it will keep when written down. It must be written down for this reason. What is known is communicable; moreover, communicable to all. Communicable not only to men sitting in this room at the present time, but in principle communicable to all men regardless of time. So we preserve our truth, X is now wiping his nose, by writing it down for all posterity. But if we look at our truth, the truth written down on a sheet of paper, a half minute later, we see that the solid truth has evaporated. The solid truth, that Mr. X is now wiping his nose, has changed into a monstrous falsehood. He does not wipe his nose now. To keep our fleeting truth true, what do we do? What do you do in such cases in order to protect yourself against this evasiveness of truth?

Student: You add the element of time.

LS: Give me an example.

Same Student: At five o'clock he wiped his nose.

LS: But you have to add the year as well and the day. Now what happens? What did we do by this? We referred this momentarily happening to an all-comprehensive scheme: years, days, and so on. This scheme is by its nature communicable to all and does not change. But we see if we look at this date that this scheme is arbitrary. We have been using a certain calendar. The date would look entirely different in the Jewish calendar. The scheme, this allegedly permanent scheme, is essentially impermanent because of its fundamentally arbitrary character. From the point of view of man's natural reason there is no reason for choosing this or that calendar. We must do much better than this. We must seek for a natural, non-arbitrary, permanent, immutable scheme if there is to be any knowledge of this simple fact or any other fact. By the nature of things this cannot be done through any calendar, because where you begin to count in setting up your calendar is arbitrary. We have to go over to a different dimension: beyond time. What you find then is something permanent. As a result, this can be known and communicated to all as known. The knowable is the comprehending or comprehensive. The comprehended, e.g., the wiping of the nose, can be known only through something comprehensive which must be

^{vii} Plato *Republic* 484b3-7, 485a10-b3.

permanent.

Let us take another example not so low as that wiping of the nose. Let us take history in the sense of historical knowledge. Wherein does the value of historical knowledge consist? I think there is an obvious practical usefulness. If you want to act now in a given society, it is extremely important, perhaps indispensable, that you know how this situation in which you act came about. This is the very important but only practical value of history. The higher value of history depends ultimately on its being a possession for all time. History becomes truly enlightening only on the historian's understanding of what happened then and there in the light of the permanent or essential possibilities of man. This is the root for Aristotle's contention that poetry is more philosophic than history.^{viii}

Poetry can limit itself and choose the data with an exclusive concern for the essential. History, on the other hand, has to bring in such things as the wiping of the nose because they may be of some consequence. In themselves however these incidents are wholly uninteresting. The comprehensive must be permanent and unchangeable. If it were not, it would have to be accounted for by something still more comprehensive which accounts for the impermanence or the change. This is what Plato means when he says that [only] being, as distinguished from becoming, is knowable.

Let us pursue that a bit further. It is in principle possible to give a perfectly lucid account why any being is or why it has [the character] that it has. This is the perfect knowability of everything. We could say that this is a postulate, perhaps that which underlies science, but this in no way guarantees its execution. A postulate as postulate never guarantees its true possibility, because it cannot guarantee the possibility of its full execution. Let us take a simple example. X is digging in his garden in order to plant a tree. He finds a treasure. We call this chance. By this we mean that no further explanation can ever deprive this happening of its character as a mere coincidence. If you try to explain further, you talk nonsense. If, for example, you say he wanted to plant that tree in the garden in order that he might live in its shade, or eat the apples, or improve the value of the real estate and so on, none of these alter the situation a bit. You might say that he found that treasure because it was there and had been put there by some human being. Moreover, through historical records you might find who put it there and what the circumstances were that resulted in its being placed there, but even this would not alter a bit the absolutely coincidental character of the discovery. Here we have something that is really perfectly dark. We have mere coincidence on which no additional light may be thrown by any further thinking about it. It will always remain obscure. Is this really so? We can understand the possibility of such coincidences. How they are possible can be known. Consider the limited knowledge of man concerning future things. This man who buried the treasure there did it in the hope that he could return and dig it up. He could not know, however, whether the future would make this possible. He might be killed or even die peacefully. So we can understand the possibility of coincidences, and that is something that is really intelligible. The possibility of coincidences as distinguished from this or that coincidence is the comprehensive within which and through which coincidences are possible.

The Platonic contention or the philosophical contention generally is of this character. It is clear

^{viii} Aristotle *Poetics* 1451a36-b11.

that not every little or big thing in itself may be perfectly lucid, but the comprehending is in principle perfectly lucid. That is what Plato means by this equation of the being and the intelligible. The comprehending must be permanent and can be known. The comprehended as merely comprehended cannot be known properly, but we know and understand why it cannot be properly known. In other words, the elusive occurs within a non-elusive context and only within that content. That is the burden of Aristotle's analysis of chance in the second book of the *Physics*.^{ix} Only being can be known and every being can be known. But why this step from only to every? With what right does Plato take this great step? Being—that which is always—is in no way elusive, for to be elusive means to come into sight and to withdraw again. Elusiveness implies change and thus non-being. By the way, we understand from here the emphasis on unchangeability of god in the second dogma of the theology of the second book.^x You may recall the thought of goodness and the unchangeability of god. That is [a] provisional statement of what Plato means.

We might raise the following objection. A being which is permanent cannot be elusive if elusive means to come to sight and to withdraw from sight, because then it would not be permanent. But could the elusiveness of being not be due to man's weakness, to his inability to look for any length of time into something very clear and lucid? Both Plato and Aristotle admit it. This would in no way detract from the essential knowability of being, which as permanent is essentially permanently accessible. So when Aristotle says at the beginning of the second book of the *Metaphysics* that our mind's eyes are related to being in the way in which the eyes of bats are related to the light of the sun, it is really no objection.^{xi} It means simply there are certain essential limitations in man's perceptiveness which do not do away with the essential knowability [of being]. The thesis is not that everything that is is necessarily known to man, but that it is knowable.

But we have not yet come to the real problem. This problem can be stated in the following manner. May there not be beings which are not merely elusive, in the sense in which I defined this term—coming into sight and withdrawing—but simply inaccessible? Let us take the example, the mysterious God of the Bible. His ways are not man's ways.^{xii} "I shall be that which I shall be." This passage has generally been translated "I am what I am" but I don't believe this captures the essence. It has made it possible with this translation to effect a reconciliation between the biblical and Greek philosophical tradition. The biblical statement is much more uncompromising: "I shall be what I shall be."^{xiii} This means that no one shall know it; no one can predict what God is. There is no essence of God that might be grasped. But the biblical God is a wise God and a good God. With a view to His wisdom, we ascribe intelligence to Him. With a view to His will we ascribe goodness to Him. However difficult these ascriptions may be, we are compelled in speaking of the biblical God to speak of his intelligence and will.

This leads to a further question. What is the relation of intelligence and will in God? The problem has also been discussed in the form of the question: What does God's omnipotence

^{ix} Aristotle *Physics* 195b31-199b33.

^x Plato *Republic* 380d1-383c7.

^{xi} Aristotle *Metaphysics* 993b9-11.

^{xii} *Isaiah* 55:6-11.

^{xiii} *Exodus* 3:14.

mean? Can He will to do everything which He can do? Granting the omnipotence, can He will everything which He can do? Are there things which He cannot will to do? He cannot command His creatures to hate Him and to hate their fellow creatures. He cannot create another God and abdicate in his favor.^{xiv} I believe I know what the theologians say about these matters, but I would like to state now what the philosophers said about this. The philosophers inferred from this that God is bound by His essence. His inscrutable will, His unforeseeable and unfathomable actions, remain within an unchangeable realm. The mystery of God's deeds is bound by what is essentially knowable, i.e., what God cannot do or what is incompatible with His essence. This is the way in which Plato, Aristotle, and some of their followers have argued over against the theological position. This is what is meant by the Platonic assertion which we have discussed. Ultimately there must be iron bonds which keep the whole together, and if there is a creator God there are iron bonds which limit the possibility of what an omnipotent god, even an omnipotent God, can do. We must necessarily arrive at that. There must necessarily be such a thing. That does not mean that we can know it. It may very well be that the difficulties are so great that it is impossible to know it, but then we would certainly know the fundamental alternatives which exist regarding this last ultimate question.

Student: I was curious to know why the will would still be inscrutable.

LS: Because it would still be a good and holy God. Then you would come into the traditional problem of how to determine the difference between a god and a very powerful demon. The only way I can see to avoid these difficulties are these.

In the nineteenth century, the Platonic notion of what philosophy is was in a way fulfilled by Hegel. Hegel's doctrine is entirely different from that of Plato, but this notion which Plato sketched in the sixth book—this movement among ideas and the exhausting of them, thus arriving at perfect knowledge—was fulfilled, at least formally, by Hegel. This led to a radical reaction against philosophy as such. The leader of that assault was a man who originally contributed to making Hegel possible. His name was Schelling.^{xv} Now what did Schelling do? He argued in the following vein. Let me read you the outline I have made of his argument. Hegel is absolutely right from the point of view of reason. Hegel reveals the interconnection of everything that is, and that means retrospectively the earlier philosophers, and is right under the presupposition that something is. [But] philosophy cannot answer the question, why not nothing? Why is there anything? It cannot cope with the brute fact of being, that there is something. Mere being is unintelligible. Existence is beyond all thought and the presupposition of all thought. But what about God? Schelling had the courage to say God's essence is the free creation of God as mere existence. Then, of course, God's essence would not be the ultimate fact. That was one way. The other way was to deny the existence of a wise and good God and simply speak of a mysterious being or beings. Then the argument that appeals from the mysteriousness of the

^{xiv} Maimonides *Guide of the Perplexed* II 13 28a, III 15 29a.

^{xv} The German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854) is referred to by Strauss during the question and answer period following his 1962 lecture, "Why We Remain Jews: Can Jewish Faith and History Still Speak to Us?" as one example of Germans "who were not only friendly to Jews but showed a very profound understanding of what one would call the 'substance' of Judaism." Leo Strauss, *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 336.

biblical God to His intelligence and goodness is not possible. That I would admit.

There are quite a few more points that would have to be considered in order to see what Plato has in mind, but the main point I hope I have made clear. The crucial thesis, if we may disregard all the special Platonic terminology, is that it is evidently necessary that there be ultimately something comprehensive holding together everything; moreover, that this be unchangeable and permanent, and thus permanently accessible by itself and by this very fact knowable. This began with Parmenides. It might be noted that Parmenides was the only hero ever mentioned in a Platonic book title.^{xvi} That was his assertion. One can say that Parmenides said only one thing. He said that to be and to be knowable is the same.^{xvii} This was a marvelous insight from him. His great opponent is famous for saying the opposite—that everything is flux and that nothing is permanent.^{xviii} Parmenides' suggestion, however, is the beginning of what Plato and Aristotle were to develop in much more detail. Today, not only because of the biblical tradition but also because of modern philosophy the Platonic-Aristotelian contention is very difficult for us to understand. I would say the difficulty increases from generation to generation. In the last fifty years, owing to the tremendous changes in both science and philosophy, the difficulty has increased beyond what it was in the nineteenth century. Thus we should by no means deceive ourselves about the gravity and difficulty of the issue. I should like that we understand this as well as we can.

I would like to mention only one crucial point. One great event in the history of this problem was Kant. Kant's thesis, as you learn in every schoolbook, was [that] the thing in itself is unknowable.^{xix} Note the Platonic phraseology: thing in itself. We know only phenomena. This is surely at the opposite pole of Plato and Aristotle. And it was precisely Kant who provoked the reassertion of Plato and Aristotle on an entirely different plane by Hegel. Hegel's argument against Kant can be stated simply as follows.^{xx} Kant says the thing in itself is unknowable. Kant claims to know that the thing in itself is unknowable, but it is impossible to know that the thing in itself is unknowable without having knowledge of the thing in itself. This is by no means sufficient, but one can say this is the simple starting point of Hegel: that Kant's assertion that [he knows that] the thing in itself is absolutely unintelligible is incompatible with the assertion [of the unknowable nature] of the thing in itself.

Many, many more things would have to be said in connection with this section, but let me mention just one more point. It seems to me that what we have been discussing constitutes the most important difficulty in present day thought in understanding Plato and Aristotle. For reasons which even I could speak of, Hegel's solution of the Platonic-Aristotelian problem, i.e., perfect intelligibility of the whole—which, to repeat, is perfectly compatible with the fact that the non-elusive includes the elusive, because once you know that it is essentially necessary that there be elusiveness within the non-elusive there is no problem—leaves much to be desired. Unfortunately Hegel is more generally known in his Marxist degradation than in its original form, but the simple argument is what you hear. For example, people are inclined to see fascism

^{xvi} Plato's *Parmenides*.

^{xvii} Parmenides (Diels-Kranz, *Die Fragmenter der Vorsokratiker*) 28 B 3, 6.1-2.

^{xviii} Heraclitus. See Plato *Cratylus* 440c1-d3.

^{xix} Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* Bxxvi-xxxi, B45 A30, B305-315 A249-260.

^{xx} Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, Part One*, § 44-45.

as a single entity. If you say that this thing, facism, looks very different in Germany, Italy, and Spain, that Hitler is an entirely different figure than Mussolini or Franco, the simple answer is that this is accidental. These things are irrelevant and the essential thing is the basic similarity. Underlying this is Hegel's way of arguing, although the themes are not the same. Hegel shows in his work the essential necessity of accident. If there is an essential necessity for accident, that implies you do not even begin to explain accident as accident, so there is no problem in respect to that.

But the point I was trying to make is this. For certain reasons Hegel could not make his completion of Plato and Aristotle, except with the help of the philosophy of history. There is no philosophy of history in Plato and Aristotle. In Hegel, the philosophy of history is absolutely essential to the whole teaching. Permit me to make that statement now, although the reasons for this, as you may see later, are very difficult to grasp. Let me explain it very briefly. History—what we call history or what Hegel calls the historical process—is, as Hegel and many after him would like to call it, a story of human folly and crime. There is also wisdom and nobility, but most of the time folly and crime. The philosophy of history meant that this sequence of stupidities rarely interrupted by acts of wisdom and decency is perfectly reasonable. There seems to be an advance of “rationalism” if the theme of what is popularly called history is no longer fundamentally a sequence of messes but is a meaningful, intelligible, reasonable process. I think you can see that this seems to mean an advance of “rationalism.” There remained, however, the problem of a large area subject to either chance or inscrutable providence. If this area could be recovered for reason, the whole life of man must be seen as and consist of part of that historical process. Philosophy itself must be a part of this historical process. How can there then be a fulfillment of philosophy, an achievement of the goal of philosophy, wisdom? It is possible only under one condition: that this process has reached an end. If the historical process is complete, by this very fact man is beyond history.^{xxi} This element of Hegel's teaching, that the historical process is complete, was the least acceptable to any one of his followers. But the other part of Hegel's teaching survives, although with various modifications.

What is the outcome of this as it affects us today? Thought is radically dependent on history. You must have heard this, although it may take a variety of forms, e.g., that it is dependent on society rather than history and so on. But these are all more special formulations of the same problem. Thought is essentially dependent on something non-thinking. Even a crude behaviorist would say the same thing. But the difference here is this: this thinking changes and will change in an absolutely unpredictable way. If you say that thinking depends on the stomach, or on sex, or what have you, the implication is that by science we will be able to understand the entire process. Thought will be able to understand that on which thought depends, and thus thought will in the final analysis be able to master that, the stomach or what have you, on which thought depends. But if this on which thought depends is changing in a fundamentally unpredictable way, and this is meant by history, then thought can never master that on which thought depends. Thought depends essentially on something which is mysterious and inscrutable.^{xxii} While this is perhaps not clearly stated or understood, I think this continues to play a considerable role in present day thought, and it is certainly at the opposite pole from what Plato and Aristotle thought. I think I will cease outlining my position at this point and invite your questions and

^{xxi} See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 29.

^{xxii} See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 30-31.

objections.

Student: Would you comment on the thought that Hegel turned Kant upside down?

LS: Not upside down. Hegel said what had been said earlier, that without the thing in itself you cannot come into Kant's doctrine, and with the thing in itself you cannot stay there. How do we know that there is a thing in itself? I believe that one can give an answer to that question. One can say Kant knew that what can be known, truly or scientifically known, is incompatible with the phenomenon of human freedom. But human freedom is a fact. Therefore there must be this cleavage. Ultimately, moreover, Hegel's criticism of Kant is a criticism of Kant's analysis of morality. From the purely formal point of view, however, there is a great difficulty implied in saying there is a thing in itself and that it is wholly unknowable. If nothing else, its existence would have to be established. This is some knowledge in itself.

Same Student: In the Kantian assertion that there is an essential accident, that there is some experience which is essentially unexplainable, e.g., the discovery of the treasure, wouldn't you have to know more than we can know of the assertion about this?

LS: But if you understand—and this is what Kant says—the essential impossibility of raising a certain question, then you have understood everything. This doesn't make sense, however. In the case of chance, you can read how Aristotle analyzes it in the *Physics*. Chance is impossible except in an overall framework which is not chance-like. This is fundamentally what all philosophers have said.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Not necessarily. Such a discussion as that between Thomas Aquinas and Averroes took place on the basis of common principles—the famous first principles of Aristotle. To that extent, it was a much more limited issue. ^{xxiii} But please don't misunderstand me. If you think what I said comes even within hailing distance of an adequate statement of the issue between the Bible and Greek philosophy, I must disavow that.

Student: But you seem to stress the grounds on which the debate would be joined.

LS: If we use this very loose word existentialism, which covers as all such words do an infinite variety of sins, we may get into trouble. I think Schelling is really caught in a quite impossible position, because he tries to maintain biblical theology and making, on that basis, God's essence a creation of God's existence. I believe that is really not possible. I think the problem is this. Existentialism as the most radical reaction to philosophic rationalism nevertheless grew out of the reaction to modern rationalism. Existentialism itself is a modern position. A real understanding of existentialism is not gained if one studies certain modern exponents, because this presupposes Hegel and everything else which must be understood properly if one really tries to understand what existentialism is about. I'm not so sure that existentialism itself has succeeded in saying clearly what it means. I will try to illustrate this, although I question whether this is the proper place. The only existentialist, if one uses this term, who is a first-rate thinker is

^{xxiii} See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 157-159.

Heidegger. Now what did Heidegger do? Heidegger was compelled, because he was a great thinker, to give an analysis of existence. This analysis of existence is, however, an analysis of the essence of existence. Do you see what I mean? This may not be the same as an analysis of an essence of essence, but it is still the essence of existence which is his theme. ^{xxiv}

Popularly speaking, one could say that it is extremely hard to run away from reason. These demands assert themselves. But to continue this discussion would lead us very far. I would be grateful only if I had made clear, or at least somewhat clearer than it was before, what this apparently atrocious assertion of Plato—only being can be known and every being is knowable—means. Needless to say, the difficulty in understanding what Plato means is in no way smaller than that of understanding what a present-day thinker means. We only have the dubious advantage that there is a tradition of more than two thousand years which has developed in various ways the Platonic-Aristotelian notion. If we hear the word essence or existence, we immediately “know”^{xxv} what that means. I think the crucial point is ultimately the permanent, what Plato calls the always and unchangeable and what the present theologians call the eternal. The characteristic thesis of existentialism proper is that it claims to have done away with the demand for the eternal or the permanent. The last ground cannot be understood as something permanent. As Heidegger put it with great honesty, if in a shocking way, the last ground is being or to be, [not to be always].^{xxvi} I don't want to go into any detail at this point, but perhaps a few words will clarify this. ^{xxvii} —[To be, not to be *always*] is the highest ground [according to Heidegger]. Being can be only by partaking of to be.^{xxviii}

The way in which Plato would transcend this problem can be stated as follows throughout the work: The completion of philosophy, the exhaustive knowledge of that all-comprehensive permanence, would be achieved by knowledge of the good, if it is not identical with knowledge of the good. If the idea of the good, whatever this may be, is not knowable proper, but as he states, it can barely be seen, then the whole position would have to be restated.^{xxix} It was necessary to state this first demand, that it be permanent and knowable. But if this second and crucial qualification comes in, then I think one would have to say full knowledge is really not possible. I think we have to understand these two moments, of which in the *Republic* only one is carried through. What is the ideal, as we would say, of knowledge? What would be perfect knowledge? We can assume that perfect knowledge would be a necessary condition for the attainment of perfect government. Now if this perfect knowledge is not possible, then ideal government is not possible. This is the argument as outlined in the *Republic*. But as I stated earlier, every Platonic dialogue states only a part of the problem. There is always an abstraction.

One can perhaps say that all later interpretation of Plato was more specific in one way or the other than Plato was. Take neo-Platonism as an example. Neo-Platonism was an attempt to

^{xxiv} See Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 31.

^{xxv} Quotation marks in original transcript.

^{xxvi} See Strauss's discussion of Heidegger and existentialism in his 1956 lecture, “Existentialism,” *Interpretation* 22 (1995): 303-318, especially 308-313.

^{xxvii} There is a break in the tape here.

^{xxviii} The transcriber notes that there follows an exchange of roughly ten minutes which is not clear enough to be transcribed.

^{xxix} Plato *Republic* 517a8-c5.

descend from the idea of the good. The idea of the good is what they call the One. They assume that this descent is possible. There may be something here, and one can often learn something by considering the later interpretations. But one must always remember one little thing. There have always been two varieties of Platonism. There is the later Platonism, the neo-Platonism, and also that of Plato's own school. I believe that when one looks at what Plato has said, one cannot assign him simply to either branch. Plato himself sometimes leaves one in doubt. Take as an example this highest theme, the idea of the good, stated in the *Republic*. This is not mentioned anywhere else in Plato's work. You would imagine that such a theme would pervade all his work and yet this does not prove to be so. Plato speaks of this problem in other dialogues, but there is never the treatment given elsewhere as is given at this point. There are those who have criticized the lack of a systematic approach on the part of Plato. In Plato you do not find a simple, communicable, demonstrable answer. The simple answer to this is perhaps that Plato was more certain of the problem than of the solution. I think this is a basic difference between Plato and many of those who have come after him. Even the skeptics were so sure of the impossibility of answers that they became in a sense much more dogmatic than he. Some of the modern investigators, e.g., Locke, Kant, and so on, seem to suggest that there is a dividing line between what you can know and what you cannot. You cannot step beyond this line. For Plato there is no such assignable limits. Certainly there is a certain suspicion that it is not likely that man will go beyond a certain point, but there is no certain limit advanced. I think that would be impossible for Plato.

Student: What is the relation between the knowable and becoming? What effect does the one have on the other?

LS: These are words which Plato uses. I think we should be careful to avoid what the translator does in introducing the term "concepts." This is an absolutely un-Platonic interpretation of ideas. Ideas are beings which are apprehended more or less clearly. They are beings. They are not concepts. Take the starting point of the whole doctrine, the kind or species of dogs. This is not a concept. Plato uses such words as imitation, participation. But let us return to your original question. There are two steps to be implied in your question. Let us assume that we understand this general proposition, that pertaining to the comprehensive which is knowable. This is one thing, but then a further question arises: Why does Plato say this ultimate, comprehensive knowable has the character of idea? This is the first step. I believe the answer to that is not too difficult. The ideas add only one point: that this ultimate comprehensive has an articulation. It is not homogeneous but heterogeneous.

That is what he means by ideas. But the question is how is this related to the becoming and perishing. Consider as an example the idea of the dog, and this dog here. What makes it possible for the dog to be a dog? What gives him the character of a dog? That is as real, if I may use this modern word, as his scratching and whatever else he may do. On the contrary, this scratching is only possible by virtue of his having the essential character of a dog. Any doggish thing depends on a fundamental structure, which means doggishness. Let us take this on the human level. Everyone has a notion of what the good is. They call it values today, but we can ignore this distinction. This means that every man has some inkling or some opinion of what is good. These differences of opinion about the good, what is now called values, do affect human beings. Would you agree with that? For example, if someone thinks the good thing consists in having the

maximum license to do just what one likes, this would stand the individual and society in a completely different relationship than if they would think goodness consists in a certain nobility of character and so on. If what men think about the good is of any importance, then it would be of the utmost importance that they would *know* what is the good and truly the good. To know what justice is, for example, is the indispensable condition for acting justly. I don't see any difficulty at this point. The difficulty raised by Plato here, when he says that some people say wisdom is the good and thus the question turns on what is wisdom, does not change the fact that it is still knowledge of the good that is at stake.

Student: What about the bad man and his relation to the good?

LS: I think this is a secondary question. We must really be open-minded. It may very well be, and without knowledge of the good we can't answer this question, that quite a few people cannot be persuaded to see the light. Some compulsion would be necessary. Since we all admit the necessity of some compulsion in one form or another, the difficulty presented here would be not overwhelming. It is really a secondary question whether all men can be persuaded. This is a question that Plato takes up in the *Gorgias* as well as elsewhere. Are there not limits to persuasion? Perhaps compulsion will always be a factor.

Student: How does one determine what constitutes the essence? Is this not more or less arbitrary?

LS: It is obviously not of the essence of the dog to be black; there are white dogs, red dogs, and so on. Likewise, there is an amazing variety with regard to size. But are there not essential characteristics which we find in every dog and which if not present make it a defective dog? Take as an example a dog that has only three legs instead of four.

May I say one point which is in a way, although a very general way, an answer to your question? Starting from this primary demand of an ultimate, permanent comprehensive (as you may call it) and for several other reasons, he (Plato) felt it was necessary to conceive of that ultimate, comprehensive as in itself articulated, consisting of heterogeneous parts, i.e., ideas. He never developed anywhere, for reasons underlying his whole form of writing, a demonstration of the doctrine of ideas. Certainly Plato had his reasons, and better reasons than he gives, for presenting it, but we have to find [them] out for ourselves. If you remember the end of the fifth book, where the doctrine of ideas comes up explicitly for the first time, you will recall that this is presented to Glaucon. This means that it is presented not to this particular individual at this particular time, but to a human type. Glaucon had no notion of ideas in any technical sense. He was a well-bred young man but in no way an acute pupil of Socrates. Suddenly he is confronted with this doctrine. What Shorey and these other translators assume is that Glaucon knows everything about the Platonic doctrine of ideas. This is absurd.

Now how does Glaucon understand this? I think there is one passage that is particularly revealing, 487a (page 13). After Socrates has described the philosopher as a paragon of virtue, Glaucon indicates that not even the god of blame could find fault. Blame himself could not blame them. Everyone knew what Blame with a capital B was. One does not have to know anything about the Platonic ideas or doctrine to understand this: there was a being called Blame.

Now what do we know of this being? He blames everything. He is nothing but blame; every part of him blames. Isn't it strange that there are such creatures? We could never apply this to a human being, however nasty he might be. Even though we know some people who tend to denigrate everything, still there are some things, perhaps themselves, they do not handle in this fashion. But let me give you a much better example. There was a being which the Greeks called Victory. Now there was a victory at Marathon and many other places, but there was also Victory with a capital V. Now Glaucon would immediately understand that Victory with a capital V is something different from the victory at Marathon. He would understand without any difficulty that Victory herself or itself would be something quite different from *this* statue of Victory. And if he were still more clever, he could even see that Victory herself, the Goddess of Victory, is something altogether different from all statues everywhere. All statues are only imitations of that. If you can presuppose that, then it is clear that such a man would understand immediately what an idea is. We do not have such gods—for example, Victory—whose every inch, every finger and so on is victory. If you look at such a statue you see that. Once you can presuppose such a thing, it is no longer difficult to understand the thought of ideas. The difficulty we encounter is no longer present. Understand, however, that I don't mean to suggest by this that the Platonic doctrine of ideas is a specifically Greek doctrine, a doctrine connected with the Greek mind which accepted this kind of god.

Later on Socrates suggests that the idea of the good is beyond being. Glaucon exclaims, "Apollo!"^{xxx} Look! The idea of the good is in proportion to the sun. The sun is typically thought to be a god.^{xxxi} What is more natural than to say the idea of the good must be a god somehow akin to the sun-god but still more awe inspiring? I say this not as a complete answer to your question, but you must not forget that some difficulties of a purely external yet very important character stem from the fact that Plato presented the doctrine of ideas in his dialogues to people who knew of such creatures, if we can call them creatures. I think one can draw at least one conclusion from this: Plato's ideas are really meant to take the place of the gods. I think this is safe to say. I do not say that we should become idolators for a certain time in order to understand Plato, but that we have to find a kind of everyday, imaginary basis from which we can get an access to the doctrine of ideas is clear. It would be better, however, to find a more solid basis. The most simple basis for understanding what Plato meant is really this simple thing: that the word Plato uses for ideas most of the time is the word *eidos*. This word is used throughout the *Republic*, as well as many other dialogue[s], with the simple, commonsense meaning of a kind of thing or a species. The word species, which we use as a matter of course in biology, is the translation of this word after it had gone through Plato and Aristotle. One has to think of this problem, this most visible and manifest problem, in the form of the different classes of things, especially of natural things—dogs and cats, but also of human things, e.g., of society in general. This is not identical with any specific civil society. One must adopt this sort of attitude if he is to understand Plato and Aristotle.

I add one more point which may be of help to you. If you look at dogs, for example, what is characteristic of the species of dogs? Individual dogs preserve themselves by eating, biting, and so on. How does the species preserve itself?

^{xxx} 509b6-c2.

^{xxxi} 508a4-c2.

Student: By generation.

LS: The species perpetuates itself and is permanent by virtue of generation. Thus we have a link between the species and the individual. If you start from that angle, then I believe you are closer to the starting point of Plato than if you start from concepts, which is hardly a Platonic term. Moreover, as a little help for the imagination you might also fall back on the idea of Victory. At least then you understand Glaucon even if you do not understand Plato fully. Then at least you have taken the first step. We should remember that every man there, Glaucon and the rest, knew or believed in the existence of beings, e.g., Victory, which differ from all victories although it is present in every victory. Of course victory was present at Marathon, but this presence at Marathon was not Victory itself. I think this is a point that Glaucon immediately understands, although one might question whether he really understands it completely.

Student: What about the idea of the good? Does Glaucon understand this?

LS: I can't speak with any definiteness about it, but it seems to me that in his mind what he grasps of it is colored by Apollo. ^{xxxii} Of course these are strange names to him, the idea of the good and so on. Rarely can we say that we have a perfectly clear and distinct understanding of the things about which we talk. I say this in answer to the difficulties raised at the end of the fifth book. The argument of Plato is wholly insufficient. On the other hand, however, it must have been persuasive to Glaucon. A real interpretation would tell us why this wholly atrocious argument is fully persuasive to X. I believe I have done a little bit to answer this question as far as the ideas are concerned. While it is not bad to think of Victory, I think it is better to think of these puppies, if we may, and what they mean.

Student: The exposition of ideas which we have been putting forth here seems very similar to the exposition which Socrates puts forth in the early part of the *Parmenides*.^{xxxiii} It seems, however, that the formulation of the doctrine of ideas in later dialogues is somewhat different. Instead of ideas being ideas of things, e.g. dogs and so on, the typical ideas being talked about are such things as unit, diversity, similarity, and so on. Rather than ideas being analogues of things, they seem to be components.

LS: There are a few things left to be said. Granted that in the first part of the *Parmenides* great difficulties are raised to the so-called doctrine of ideas as set forth in the *Phaedo* as well as elsewhere, still he must have felt that this simple presentation is the best beginning. But as to your second point, that Plato seems to concentrate on other examples of ideas in his later dialogues, take the *Sophist* as an example: I think a closer inspection would reveal that the point of the species still remains applicable.^{xxxiv}

Same Student: But it seems to me that the ideas of unity and diversity are of a different order from cat, dog and so on.

LS: But maybe the Platonic doctrine of ideas was incompatible with a derivation or deduction.

^{xxxii} 509b6-c2.

^{xxxiii} *Parmenides* 128e6-1356.

^{xxxiv} Apparently a reference to *Sophist* 243d3-249d5.

That would be the difference between Plato and Hegel. Thus I think one must start with this simple phenomenon, the fact that the world which we know consists obviously of heterogeneous parts. Every attempt to deduce the visible heterogeneity from fundamental homogeneity destroys the phenomenon of the world.

Student: This is what Parmenides does, is it not? Doesn't he deny the fundamental heterogeneity of the world?

LS: If I am not mistaken, this is the situation in which Socrates is pitted against all pre-Socratic and quite a few post-Socratic thinkers. The denial of the ideas, which means the denial of the fact that the whole consists of heterogeneous parts, which heterogeneous parts can as such only be mentally grasped, is the real difference between them. This is the simple meaning of the later statement that all pre-Socratic thinkers were insane or mad.^{xxxv} They were subversive, although this is not to be taken in the political sense. They subverted the world which we know and in which we find our bearings by saying, in effect at least, that there is no such thing. Imagine a mathematical formula for dog or cat. Heaven knows what formula would fill the bill, but we can imagine such a thing. You would then understand dog by reducing dog to a non-doggish thing. For Socrates these visible, familiar, everyday things belong to the very essence of ultimate reality. In the pre-Socratic thought, ultimate reality has nothing to do with dogs and cats; thus the claim on the part of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, as well as some later thinkers, that they alone preserved the phenomenon. They alone do not subvert human life radically by reducing the visible differences to homogeneity. What you find in present-day social science is a reflection of this non-Socratic way of thinking. You view the political phenomena through non-political phenomena. I call our attention to the use of psychology and sociology in this respect.^{xxxvi}

¹ Deleted "so"

² Deleted "only."

³ Deleted "these characters."

^{xxxv} Possibly a reference to Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.11-15, 4.6.

^{xxxvi} The transcriber notes that the last ten minutes of the recording were not clear enough to transcribe.

Session 11: May 7, 1957

Leo Strauss: —[in progress] [This] would be even more difficult to understand. He says those studies which would contribute “to the turning about of the soul from things becoming and perishing to those which are.”ⁱ Which field of study emerged here?

Student: Arithmetic, geometry, solid geometry, astronomy, and harmonics.

LS: Astronomy and harmonics are used as parallels here. Just as astronomy deals with mathematical relations among visible things, so harmonics deals with mathematical relations among audible things. And after he has completed the discussion of these preliminary fields, and after having indicated why they are essentially insufficient, he turns to philosophy, which he calls "dialectics."ⁱⁱ Quite a few questions arise here; for example, what is missing here?

Student: Logistic.ⁱⁱⁱ

LS: Logistic is taken with arithmetic.^{iv} We do not make this distinction in this form. In Greek arithmetic means the knowledge of numbers, and logistic is what we call arithmetic—the arithmetic operations. Arithmetic proper is only knowledge of numbers. It has no exact equivalent in anything we do today, not even in the theory of numbers, although it has a certain kinship with the theory of numbers. Take as an example the division of all number into those odd and those even and the various possible combinations. The Greeks treat arithmetic and logistic together. But what is missing here?

Student: Political science.

LS: True, but go on.

Same Student: Literature, history.

LS: Why is literature missing? Let us not forget that physics is missing also. Now why is literature missing? There is no exact equivalent to what we call literature in Plato's language, but we can easily find an equivalent for that. What about poetry?

Student: Don't they give that outside their education?

LS: They get it, but where? It is included in music, which has a much larger application than we give it. But what about history?

Student: It could be that these are things which have come into being and thus were not always.

ⁱ Plato *Republic* 525c5-6.

ⁱⁱ 522b2-535a1.

ⁱⁱⁱ An anglicized version of the Greek word *logistike*, the art of calculation.

^{iv} 525a9-10.

LS: They do not have this function of making possible an ascent from¹ becoming to being. The same applies to physics. Physics proper has to do with bodies which come into being and perish. Whether Plato can admit a science of bodies which come into being and perish is a great question. He presented this kind of physics in his dialogue *Timaeus* but specifically as a kind of tale rather than as a science.^v But what about political science? Why does it not appear among these studies?

Student: Doesn't it come later?

LS: Yes. One could give two answers. In the first place, as a true science it would presuppose knowledge of the good, and this is possible only at the end of the dialectical process. And if we take it in a cruder way, as a kind of empirical finding one's bearings, that requires the activity in the cave. This comes much later and is not good for a young man.

Student: I wondered if there might not be a sense in which political science is included in harmonics, bringing different parts into harmony?

LS: But we must not overlook the fact that harmonics deals with sounds. There is no reason for going beyond that.

Student: It would appear that rhetoric is lacking.

LS: He doesn't speak about rhetoric in the *Republic*. This means that we would have to consider the other Platonic dialogues on rhetoric, especially the *Phaedrus*, in which it would appear that the true rhetoric is a kind of appendix or accompaniment of the dialectic. Thus it could not be such a study as those outlined here.

Student: Are not both political science and history a part of the earlier training?

LS: I think that one could easily defend on Platonic grounds that among the books to be read would be such a book as the historical study by Thucydides. This is really musical in Plato's sense of the word and not simply a collation of facts. I think one could defend that, but still there is no place either in Plato or Aristotle for history as a science. Such a thing is absolutely impossible. What would be scientific in it would be the understanding of the nature of man and the permanent possibilities which are actualized in considerable variations in different times and in different societies. In this respect, then, Plato and Aristotle are in agreement with the scientific political scientists of our time who regard historical studies as merely prefatory to the truly scientific task. This task would be to discover laws, permanent correlations, and so on. To this extent and from this point of view present-day positivistic science is the only power, at least academic as far as I can see, which preserves this crucial distinction between philosophy and history. But it is wholly different. Its non-teleological character and its completely non-noetic character make it so. But the understanding that there is a fundamental difference between knowledge of fact (history in the strict and narrow sense) and science (as knowledge of universals) continues to linger as a kind of memory. You must say that, in fairness to these

^v *Timaeus* 29c4-d6.

people. They believe, however, that what distinguishes their science from the Platonic-Aristotelian science marks a tremendous progress, whereas one might say that it marks a tremendous impoverishment. I don't believe there is any question about it. But this is a major problem which we cannot go into at this point.

Student: The natural sciences, biology and so on, appear to be missing also.

LS: Yes. Plato treats what we call natural science in a dialogue called the *Timaeus*. He presents natural science there not as a science but as a likely tale.^{vi} That is one of the deepest difficulties for Plato: to find the possibility of a true science of things which come into being and perish. This is really an infinite problem. Aristotle, by virtue of his fundamental change of Plato, made possible a natural science. This remains one of the most difficult problems in Plato. To mention only one point, when he speaks about the other species of animals in the *Timaeus*, he tries to understand them as decayed forms of man. In his presentation, certain human beings who behave in this and this kind of way become in another incarnation birds, rats, skunks, or what have you.^{vii} This is not quite satisfactory and Plato did not believe it was satisfactory, but he indicated by this what is in a way an insoluble problem, a problem which is in no way solved by evolution itself. In short, how can you account for the fact that there are these and these and not other species of animals? Can this be made really lucid even by a complete factual awareness of all species which are in existence and those which have become extinct? There is apparently a limit here to what a rational account of why these and not these can tell us. Plato was sure that he could give a rational account why there should be man and, in principle, why, if there should be man, there must be brutes and plants. But he apparently regarded the solution of why these and these rather than something else to be something beyond what he could know.

I think we can get a glimpse of this if we look at very strange creatures—not dogs, cats, and so on, but creatures which they tell us lived some years back. There is some mystery about all this. Take the thought that most human beings seem to range in size from about five to seven feet, although there are some exceptions. There seems to be some necessity for that. If people are too big or too small, something is wrong with them bodily as well as mentally. This strange fact of bodily size, then, has something to do with the most essential thing in man, i.e., thinking. How can we understand this strange relation of something which in itself is not intelligible, that there should be thinking beings capable² [of seeing] the whole and yet dependent on such a thing as size? This question of size is of some significance in paleontology, which shows us that there are species of animals whose presumptive ancestors were of an entirely different size, either much smaller or much bigger. This is something to wonder about, and it raises the question how there can ever be a unitary, coherent, and perfectly lucid account of the whole. Plato knew nothing of paleontology, but he thought enough about what was accessible to him and was conscious of some sense of limits about giving an account, for example, of the species of animals, plants, and so on. This expresses itself in the remark that we can't give more than a likely tale. You could give a description of the various species and what constitutes the optimum conditions for their survival, but this would not satisfy Plato. Plato wanted to know why. Why must there be skunks? In the popular notion there is a kind of simplistic teleology, neither Platonic nor Aristotelian, which claimed that every species in existence must be shown to be useful to man. But this leaves

^{vi} *Timaeus* 29c4-d6

^{vii} 91d6-92c3.

one with a terrific argument against rattlesnakes and what have you. This is difficult to overcome. This was certainly not what Plato or Aristotle meant. Plato was less interested in the usefulness to man than the necessity for this and this species for making up the whole. There is no question, however, that Plato's selection of these fields of study, those listed on page 1, and not others rested on very well thought out reasons.^{viii} These become partially clear in other dialogues as well as in the *Republic* itself.

Now where shall we begin with our discussion? Perhaps you have some questions.

Student: I can't see his inclusion of astronomy while at the same time rejecting physics.

LS: It is easy to see that there is an essential connection between astronomy and physics, but astronomy as Plato understands it does not deal with the stars as stars but with the motions of the stars and with the regularities of these motions. Plato makes it quite clear that for the astronomer, the visible stars only pose a problem or suggest a problem. The real thing the astronomer does centers on mathematical calculation. The models which the astronomer develops, the calculations he engages in—these are the things that constitute astronomy. Historically speaking, there was available throughout the ages prior to Plato and after Plato an astronomy which was an independent and primarily mathematical pursuit. Physics, although Plato had sketched a certain kind of mathematical physics in the *Timaeus*, did not take on the character of such a science until modern times. Astronomy had a kind of independence which was not found elsewhere.

Same Student: Would you say this was non-theoretical at this time?

LS: I think you can put it this way. As far as I understand it—and certainly this was Aristotle's understanding—there are two types of intelligibility, mathematical and teleological. I think Aristotle makes this quite clear at the end of the second book of the *Physics*.^{ix} There is a kind of rational necessity in all mathematics, and here the question of the good doesn't come in. You have certain postulates, premises, or whatever you call them, and certain other things follow with iron necessity. This is one kind of intelligibility. The other kind, and the higher, is teleological. There you see that this and this is necessary *for the sake of*, or that it is necessary for the good, whatever this good may be. The good may be the permanence of the species or it may be something else. Aristotle thought that it would be possible to give an account of nature as a whole in teleological terms. Take one of his examples. The fall of the heavy body is the seeking by the heavy body of its natural place. Plato apparently regarded a complete teleological account as impossible. Thus there is a cleavage between the mathematical sciences, including astronomy, and the teleological understanding. Plato distinguishes this occasionally by indicating two kinds of measurement: mathematical measurement; and measurement with a view to the fit and proper, the noble, the just, and the good. To the extent that I understand this point, I can only say that Plato apparently thought we have no means of giving a unitary account of the whole in which both elements are integrated. This thought has an immediate appeal for us today because it seems to be the simplest formulation of our problem. Both things are possible and necessary in each sphere. The higher importance for man is in the non-mathematical measuring, but it is not possible to unite them, it seems.

^{viii} Apparently a reference to a student paper presented in the seminar. The reading was not recorded.

^{ix} Aristotle *Physics* 198a13-200b10.

Student: I wonder if you could go into more detail about how Aristotle's disagreement with Plato makes room for the possibility of such sciences?

LS: I think by giving a teleological account of all motion including the motions of inanimate beings.

Student: By making the ends permanent?

LS: No. In a way, the ends are permanent in Plato also, but this is not the point. When Plato, in this crucial passage in the *Phaedo*, 96 following, sketches what would be a truly rational account, the account is sketched as a strictly teleological account: that I can say of every kind of phenomenon why it is good that it is as it is. Good does not necessarily mean for human utility at this point. This didn't work. As a result, Socrates embarked on a second attempt in which the teleology in the comprehensive sense is dropped and replaced by dialectics.

But I suggest that we try to take up this problem in a somewhat different way and approach it within the context of the argument in the *Republic*. The seventh book starts with a restatement of the assertion that the rule of philosophers is possible. There are three, perhaps four, emphatic statements on the subject. The first was in the fifth book, 473c to e (page 509): "If the philosophers do not rule in the cities as kings or if the present so-called rulers and kings do not philosophize genuinely and adequately, if philosophy and political power do not come to coincide, there will be no ceasing of the evils for the city and, I think, for the human race. Moreover, this regime"—the communistic regime described before—"will not see the light of day until this situation comes to pass." It seems that the coincidence of philosophy and political power is the necessary and sufficient condition of the cessation of evil. Philosophy is brought in here as a means for establishing the just city. That is to say, philosophy first comes into sight as the means for the polis and not in its own right. There is a certain primacy of the city. I think Plato just talks common sense at this point. We can all understand that. The demands of society always come first. That means that here philosophy is subordinated to the city. How does this subordination of philosophy to the city work out in practice? Here we must make a distinction. It works out in practice differently in the cities now and in the perfect city. How does subordination of philosophy to the city work out in the cities now? This is described with sufficient clarity by the fate of Socrates. If the philosopher is subordinate to the city this means that he not only has to pay taxes and go to war, but also that he must acknowledge the gods the city acknowledges and worships. He must be pious and this is at least half of justice. There is a common notion according to which justice consists of two parts: justice toward the gods is piety; justice toward man is justice in the narrower sense. Now what does justice mean here? We must remember that in every question in the *Republic* we should look for the entrance of justice, because this is the theme of the book. How is justice understood here? Take the demands of the city of Athens toward Socrates with which Socrates was thought not to have complied. How is justice understood here?

Student: Legal.

LS: Yes. But who is the just man according to this opinion?

Same Student: The man who obeys the law.

LS: And the law means not merely the positive law, nor the letter of the law. It means the whole established order. Justice is to obey the law. We cannot emphasize this enough, because it is clear that this is never discussed explicitly in the *Republic*. It is there as a problem all the time, however it may be concealed. That is the reason why the Thrasymachus section is really in a way the central section of the *Republic*. You realize that the center may be seen in some other way than the stupidly literal. That this is the center can be shown very simply. First we have Cephalus. Cephalus simply hands the matter over to his son Polemarchus. Then comes Thrasymachus, a solitary figure. Then Glaucon and Adeimantus, who by their constant change—first one talks, then the other—show that they are in a way the same. Thrasymachus then is really the center and that means that justice is to obey the laws. I think this understanding is primary, and one cannot even begin to understand what justice is unless he starts from this simple and obvious phenomenon: that the just man is primarily the lawabiding and loyal man. I think this is recognized by Aristotle as well. When he begins his discussion of justice in the fifth book of the *Ethics*, the first statement is of course to this effect:^x the just man is in a way identical with the lawabiding man. Clearly we cannot leave it at that, however, because the law as well as the gods of the city are bound to create a problem for the thinking man.

This leads us to seek for the good polis or the just *polis*. Now what is the relation of philosophy to the *polis* in the good *polis*? The philosophers rule, and thus they are not subject to any beliefs or verdicts of the non-philosophers. In a very vulgar and yet by no means misleading language, they are writing their own ticket. In Athens, however, they don't do this and other people do it for them, but for this they must pay a price. To believe that you can get a good thing without paying a price for it is a very dangerous illusion. The price consists in the requirement that the philosopher must take care of the *polis*. Being honest men, they pay the price. Still it is a price and a burden. There is the element of compulsion. As Socrates points out in the seventh book, there is something necessary but not noble.^{xi} It is not choiceworthy for its own sake. It is a kind of drudgery, of slavery. Now here we reach another understanding of justice, and this goes deeper than the simple one, although this simpler one can never be forgotten. To be just in this sense means to serve others. This statement occurs in the tenth book of Plato's *Laws*.^{xii} Literally translated it is even stronger: not only to serve others but to slave for others.

Now we come here to what is perhaps the root of the problem of the relation of philosophy to the polis. This slaving for others may be seen in the light of the biblical expression, an expression which means the same thing although interpreted a bit differently, love thy neighbor like thyself. The same phenomenon exists and men were always aware of it. This is not essential to philosophy as philosophy. This is brought out in Plato by the distinction between compulsory dialogues and spontaneous dialogues. In the case of the spontaneous dialogues Socrates likes to talk to these people; the compulsory are those in which it is his duty to talk to them. It is a duty without liking. Such a thing exists, and there are some moral philosophers who have suggested that this is the real, the more essential thing. Consider Kant. Duty appears in its purity where it is

^x Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1129b11-14.

^{xi} Plato *Republic* 540a4-b7.

^{xii} Apparently a reference to *Laws* 890a2-9.

not accompanied by any inclination.^{xiii} Another expression for that is in the distinction between justice and friendship as you find it also in Aristotle's *Ethics*.^{xiv} Friendship implies a certain spontaneity: you like the fellow. Justice means that you do it because it is your duty, but this means the element of compulsion is perhaps the more important. This slaving is not essential to philosophy as philosophy in the way in which, for example, courage and moderation are essential to philosophy as philosophy. You can easily see from everyday observation that if you are really drunk, and this varies from individual to individual, you cannot think. If you are really afraid, that is, you do not have courage, you cannot think. But this is not so in regarding justice in the sense of serving others.

There is a discussion in the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas where he makes clear that moral virtues are not required for speculation.^{xv} This is difficult to interpret because some moral virtues are obviously required for a life of thinking. The solution, I think, lies in this point. Almost all moral virtues are really needed for a life of thinking, but there is no essential connection between devotion to thinking and love of one's neighbors or whatever you might call it. The neighbor is of course not the one whom you like but also means the fellow for whom you do not care at all except by virtue of the consideration that he is your fellow creature. This being the case, and in view of the commonsense consideration that without the *polis* there is no philosophy, the philosopher and the sane person must always be concerned with the *polis*. But this is a matter of figuring out, or calculation as the Greeks would call it, and is a very secondary consequence. It does not belong to the essence of thinking. This being the case, philosophy and the *polis* tend in different directions because the *polis* cannot have enough of that spirit of caring one for another which is the full meaning of justice. Because philosophy and the *polis* tend in a different direction, there is a tension between them. This tension between philosophy and the *polis* is according to Plato and Socrates the root of the human problem or predicament. It is not for them a matter of the Oedipus complex or something of this sort. If this is so, then it is clear that this would tend to show [itself] in the most unexpected places, even among those who have never heard of philosophy. This would indicate that there is something in them which is not subject to the city. We all know from our modern liberal tradition that such an area exists. This last area of independence, of freedom from society, can only be understood according to Plato and Socrates, however, if we see the proper function of that independence, and that is to understand and to think. Then we come to the second statement of the relation between philosophy and the *polis*.

The second statement is the more central one, 502a to c (pages 75 to 76). Here we see a great change. Socrates says now that the sons of kings must become philosophers. He does not say that the philosophers must become kings. This has been prepared by the whole previous discussion. Let me repeat the main points of that discussion. The philosopher is characterized by contempt for the things which come into being and perish. From this there arises a grandeur of bearing. They cannot possibly run for political office; they do not acquire political experience as a result of this. The multitudes distrust them. Thus the solution can be brought about only if someone has power in advance, say through inheritance, and then turns to philosophy. But this reduces the chances considerably, especially if we consider the fact that cloakroom and court are not the

^{xiii} See Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959, 1976), 13-16.

^{xiv} See Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1158b29-33.

^{xv} Apparently a reference to Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II, qu. 58, a. 5.

perfect environment for the development of a potential philosopher. Consider the old suggestion by Aristotle that a middle station in life is the most conducive to human development. There are different temptations present and so on. But the other is not impossible.

Now let us turn to the statement in the seventh book, page 232.^{xvi}

“Well, then, said I, do you admit that our notion of the state and its policy is not altogether a daydream—”

Daydream is not the best translation here. In the Greek, it means wishes and prayers.^{xvii} The thought is that we have not simply pronounced wishes and prayers.

“so that though it is difficult it is in a way possible, and in no other way than that described—³[when] genuine philosophers [he is very emphatic on this point; only in this way and at this time will this be possible—LS] At that time when genuine philosophers, many or one, becoming masters of the state scorn the present honors, regarding them as illiberal and worthless, but prize the right and the honors which come from that above all things and regarding justice as the chief, the one and indispensable thing in the service and maintenance of that, reorganize and administer the city? [It is their city; they are the masters of it—LS] In what way? he said. All the inhabitants above the age of ten—”

In *what* way. Now we get the crucial condition. Philosophers must be kings, but what else?

“[T]hey will send out into the fields, and they will take over the children, removing them from the manners and habits of their parents and bringing them up in their customs and laws, which will be such as we have described. This is the speediest and easiest way in which such a city and constitution as we have portrayed could be established and prosper and bring most benefit to the people among whom this problem arises.”

You see that a new condition is added here. Although it is not absolute, if we want to have this establishment in the easiest way it is necessary not only that the philosophers become kings but that they also create, as it were, the demos. The previous demos is thrown out, and the new demos, because the majority of the children under ten would belong to the demos, are shaped by the philosophers. This is the only condition in which it would be possible. I think this is tantamount to saying that it is impossible, because the philosophers do not yet have their guardians to help them. How do you think these people will accept the separation of their children and their removal into the remote parts? Almost no political experience is sufficient to demonstrate the impossibility of this proposal.

Student: There would be an additional problem. What kind of military tactics would the new guardians adopt during this period?

LS: True, but there are other difficulties as well. The parents would still know their children and the children would know the parents. This proposal must really be subjected to a political

^{xvi} Plato *Republic* 540d1-541a7.

^{xvii} The Greek word referred to is *euchas*.

analysis if we are to understand the *Republic*. It is important to realize the impossibility of this, because only if you realize this do you arrive at a good judgment on Glaucon. Glaucon swallows this without any objections. In a way, Glaucon is a very bright young man, but at the same time he lacks simple political experience.

But let us try to understand this conclusion of the seventh book. This means, in other words, that there are practical problems. Why must they expel everyone older than ten from the *polis*?

Student: This is the age of education. All those older than this would already have begun their education.

LS: But what is the ultimate reason for that?

Same Student: They will be able to convince those younger of the truth of the stories, the history, and so on.

LS: But let us go even deeper than that. The gulf between philosophers and the demos cannot be bridged. If it were possible, this would not be necessary. If the arts of persuasion of which Socrates boasts so highly in the sixth book were workable, then this particular thing would not be necessary. At this earlier stage Socrates has suggested that it would be possible to persuade the multitude that the philosophers should rule.^{xviii} But it obviously will not work. The gulf cannot be bridged, but what have we learned in the meantime that shows this even more clearly? Plato would be a very poor artist if he had not prepared that declaration of bankruptcy. Well, what precedes that? It is preceded by the exposition of the education of the philosophers. Consider the tremendous efforts necessary to become a philosopher. If you see what this requires, then you immediately see the tremendous gulf separating those who have gone through this period of education and those who have not. Let us state it more generally. By realizing the gravity of the problem of knowing the good, the idea of the good, it is immediately clear how difficult it is to bridge this gulf. This means that the perfect *polis* as described in the *Republic* is impossible. It is impossible because the demands made—4[the] demand of knowing the idea of the good—are so enormously high. This is the least that might be said. But we must raise a further question. Does Socrates know the idea of the good? Has he seen this idea of the good which can be so barely seen?

Let us turn to this passage, 532d, page 199. “Tell me, then, what is the nature of this?^{xix} Into what divisions does it fall? And what are its ways? For it is these, it seems, that would bring us to the place where we may, so to speak, rest on the road.”

By this very fact we have arrived at the end of our journey. What is said here through Glaucon about dialectics is the same that Socrates says about the good. It is the end of the efforts.

“You will not be able, dear Glaucon, to follow me further, though on my part there will be no lack of good will. And if I could I would show you no longer an image and symbol of my meaning, but the very truth as it appears to me—though whether rightly or not I may not

^{xviii} 499c7-501e5.

^{xix} Dialectic.

properly affirm. But that something like this is what we have to see, I must affirm.”

Socrates does not affirm that he possesses this final knowledge; moreover, he says that it is no longer worthwhile to assert that. What he must assert, however, is that he knows something of this thing. We will come back to this later. For the moment, I would only say that Socrates does not possess the knowledge of the good, and Glaucon, Adeimantus, and so on, still less. What does he know? He knows the problem. He knows that the question of the good is the highest question. He does not know the answer. I think this is the link between the two arguments running through books 5 to 7. The perfect *polis* is impossible because knowledge of the good is not available. This would have to be subjected to a further analysis. Even if such knowledge were available, would this be sufficient to make possible the perfect city? This is certainly another question. But at present the perfect city is impossible on the highest level because knowledge of the good is not available.

Student: Why is it necessary to have the completed knowledge of the good? Wouldn't it be possible to establish a perfect regime in which this search might go on?

LS: But look at the other problems. You have to take the layout of the *Republic* seriously if you wish to discuss that. Knowledge of the good in the sense which you now mean it might be available. I will speak of that shortly. But, for example, you have to know, as has been made very clear, much about eugenics. What you mean now by knowledge of the good means knowledge of the end of man. This knowledge of the end of man is not sufficient. For example, it does not offer a guarantee for the proper procreation.

Same Student: This would seem to be the kind of knowledge that modern science could give us.

LS: There is an ambiguity regarding what knowledge of the good means. If it means knowledge of the end of man, then this may be available. We will come to that. But if knowledge of the good means also the all-comprehensive knowledge, then the lack of this would mean that the regime is impossible. The proof of this arises in the next book. Why does the whole thing go to pieces? Because they do not know a certain number.^{xx}

We will come to that next time, but I would like to turn to this question which you raise. I would state it as follows. Knowledge of the good means, whatever else it might mean, knowledge of the highest ground of everything. Socrates repeats so often that everything depends on our possessing such knowledge. We cannot say of anything that it is good if we do not possess the knowledge of *the* good. This is criticized extensively in the first book of Aristotle's *Ethics*. Aristotle indicates it is nonsense to suppose the shoemaker cannot make good shoes if he has not seen the idea of the good.^{xxi} I think literally this is absolutely correct as a criticism of what Socrates says. The possibility of the shoemaker or any other art is not possible on the basis of this extreme statement by Socrates. According to this everything depends on our knowledge of *the* good. Without such knowledge, we live in blindness. But is this awareness of the importance of the knowledge of the good not itself knowledge? This is the point at which you were driving. I think so, and I think this is the answer to the question to this point. Knowledge of the problem is

^{xx} 546a1-547a5.

^{xxi} Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1096a17-1097a14.

knowledge. It is certainly incomplete knowledge. Let us try to understand that by comparing this incomplete knowledge which Socrates possesses and which he formulates as a question of the good with other kinds of incomplete knowledge of which we know. This knowledge is available in the arts: shoemakers, builders, etc. What about this knowledge of the shoemaker, if we may start with the humblest, the lowest, i.e., the feet? Why is this knowledge, and why is it incomplete knowledge? Aristotle suggests that one may make excellent shoes without any knowledge of the good. I am inclined to agree with him at this point. What the shoemaker has to know is something about feet, something about roads, something about tools, materials and so on. He can know this perfectly. Why is this knowledge nevertheless incomplete?

Student: It doesn't have that prudence you were speaking about the other day.

LS: Let us not always jump to the highest level. Let us take a lower view. Why can one say that the knowledge of the shoemaker is incomplete? Let us take an empirical case. They say of Socrates or Plato that he went without shoes. Though the shoemaker asserts by his very existence that shoes are indispensable to human well-being, the example of Socrates proves that under certain conditions it may be wiser to walk without shoes. Perhaps it is wise to give your feet a greater strength, to harden them, and so on. Where to draw the line between wearing shoes and not wearing shoes is beyond the competence of the shoemaker. He would have to ask the gymnastic trainer or the physician. Similar considerations apply to the physicians. They may know everything about how to cure disease and prolong life, and yet there are cases in which a reasonable man would wonder whether this is right, whether the life should be prolonged. There are limits to his knowledge in some areas. As Plato puts it, making it clear especially in the case of the mathematical sciences, all arts make presuppositions which they do no longer question. What the essence of numbers is is no longer an arithmetical question. The mathematician presupposes the existence or availability of numbers. Everything follows from that for him, but he does not go into the higher questions. The kind of knowledge available to the arts is basically incomplete, and it should be pointed out that the same applies to all special sciences in our sense of the term. It is incomplete because of the fact that it is only partial, it is limited to a sphere, and because of its refusal to regard its presuppositions as problems.

Philosophic knowledge, in the sense in which it is available, is different. The problem of philosophy is comprehensive, total. Philosophy essentially regards its presuppositions as problems. It cannot be dogmatic in this sense. It cannot simply accept these presuppositions and not see a problem in them. So the arts have special spheres. Philosophy does not have such a special sphere. The knowledge possessed by the arts is incomplete because of the partial character of that knowledge. The knowledge possessed by philosophy is incomplete because it is knowledge of a problem. This is something very different. But we can say, and we must say, that a problem is not a solution. In other words, do we, by saying that philosophy is fundamentally concerned with a problem, draw a line between the problem and the solution, so that philosophy would be in another sense knowledge of a part? It is not complete, because completed philosophic knowledge would be wisdom. In a sense this is true. Knowledge of the problem of the good includes knowledge of the importance of such knowledge. If the problem of the good were simply seen as one problem among millions, the entire thing wouldn't be crucial. The crucial point is that this is the most important problem.

So knowledge of the problem includes knowledge of the importance of such knowledge. But what does importance mean? It means that the awareness of the importance of this problem is spurred by the fact that this is known to be the key to how men should live. Socrates is certain of this. He proves in his way that the philosophic way of life is the right way of life. Let us use another term. The Greeks called that kind of knowledge which we have or may have regarding our way of life and the details of it practical wisdom or prudence. This seems to be something like the arts. It is certainly different, but in some respects comparable because it has a sphere. On the one hand, we have the sphere of the arts and sciences and the numerous subdivisions within this; then we have the sphere of practical wisdom, and beyond that the all-comprehensive sphere which would be wisdom proper.

Let us see this. There seems to be a sphere of practical wisdom just as there is a sphere of shoemaking, of arithmetic, and so on. But, and this is a crucial point as well as an important difference between Plato and Aristotle, Plato calls this not only practical wisdom as Aristotle and other Greeks did but philosophic knowledge or theoretical knowledge. By this he means that this practical wisdom, this knowledge of how we ought to live, is not closed off from wisdom in the sense of theoretical wisdom, because the answer to how shall I live is to seek the all comprehensive truth. The result of practical wisdom in the narrower sense is the turn toward theoretical thought or speculative thought. It does—^{xxii}—[Consider] the factual limitations of human knowledge. For example, we don't know the cause of cancer. But this proves to be philosophically uninteresting because it is here known how it can be known, namely by scientific methods and so on. This is not, then, the serious problem of knowledge. So human knowledge has assignable limits, but for this very reason everything that is both important to know and can be known is known. This is the Kantian position. We cannot know the thing in itself, but what can be known is perfectly known.^{xxiii}

Let me present this again. The explanation of every natural phenomenon is philosophically uninteresting because the doctrine of Kant regarding causality and so on shows how or of what general character any solution would be; moreover, that any solution of any of the problems of natural science could not be philosophically more satisfactory than what we have now. ⁵[Plato's] answer is radically different from this modern answer. Plato does not admit that there are assignable limits to human knowledge. There are factual limits to human knowledge. Plato, on the basis of his observation of the status of his contemporaries, sees that no one possesses the solution to the problem. He has never seen a wise man in the fullest sense of the term. But he has some knowledge of the limits of the position. There cannot be knowledge of the limits of human knowledge without complete knowledge of the whole. Is this intelligible?

Let me give you a very crude formula. There emerged in modern times prior to Kant—you find such a thing in Locke and Hume—the notion that we cannot know truly but that we can know the conditions with which everything must comply if it is to be a possible object of human knowledge. Let me give you a simile. I call it a sieve. Whatever may possibly become an object of human knowledge must pass through a certain sieve. Could this be the case? Let us call that the human consciousness. It must comply with that condition—that it can enter the human consciousness—if it is to be known. If I know the general character of the human consciousness,

^{xxii} The tape was changed at this point..

^{xxiii} Consider Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* Bxxvi-xxxi, B45 A30, B305-315 A249-260.

then I know the general character of everything knowable. Does this make sense? There is this sieve, and of this sieve we have perfect knowledge: this is philosophy. The only objective of philosophy is an analysis of the consciousness, because everything which can possibly become an object of human knowledge must pass through that. If I know that, I know the limits of human knowledge in a final way. The difficulty here is this: that this knowledge of the sieve has itself gone through the sieve. It is thus not absolute knowledge. Is this clear? Does my example clarify the matter at all? It cannot be absolute knowledge, and one cannot reach true knowledge in this way. I would like to add, although I cannot develop this point at length, that more recent attempts at developing a philosophically conceived psychology ϵ [are] fundamentally the same thing as this older Kantian project. This much about what one could call Plato's formal concept of philosophy. There are no specific Platonic premises implied. Philosophy means nothing but the quest for the permanent comprehensive. Plato uses a special term for this. The philosopher is a man who sees everything together. The comprehensive view is the philosophic view. Now Plato specifies that and brings in his peculiar understanding of philosophy by saying that the philosopher is a dialectician. We have to consider that.

Let us look at the passage beginning in 537c (page 219). Shorey translates it as "he who can view things in their connection is a dialectician." This presupposes the previous identification of the philosopher with the dialectician. Now it is said that the man who views all things together, who takes the comprehensive view, is the dialectician. So the first statement—that the philosopher is the man who has the comprehensive view—represents what every philosopher meant at all times. But why is he a dialectician? What does this mean? Why does Plato call philosophy dialectics?

I will try to explain this as simply as I can. Seeing together means to see the whole. The very notion of this seeing together does not make sense if we do not have access to the whole. Such access to the whole necessarily has the character of anticipation. This means that it cannot be derivative from partial knowledge. Let us take some simple examples. I am aware of "now." Now this awareness of "now" presupposes or is guided by a perceiving awareness of time, a sequence of now, now, now. Without this perceiving awareness, I couldn't say "now"; I wouldn't be aware of this "now." This awareness doesn't have to be articulate. This would raise a secondary question. To take another example, my awareness of *this* tree means that I recognize or have some previous awareness of "tree" which allows me to recognize or identify this as a tree. I know "tree" in advance before I identify this specific thing as a tree. Or take such a very vague word as "object." My awareness of this object presupposes a primary awareness of "object." I know that to be an object means to be one object. No one could call three dead rats one object. To return to my main point, the very object or idea of seeing together would be impossible if we did not have some access to the whole. On the other hand, we do not have knowledge of the whole. Plato calls this awareness or divination, not knowledge, of the whole. An equally legitimate way of expressing this would be to say opinion about the whole. We have an opinion about the whole by the very fact that we are human beings. Without this previous opinion, philosophy would be altogether impossible. But there are many such opinions about the whole. This is the subject of cultural anthropology if it understands itself: to really make clear what is the overall understanding which guides this or that society. These opinions reveal themselves as mere opinions by the very fact that they contradict each other. But what does contradiction mean? It means that A says alpha and B says beta about the same thing in the same

respect. Contradiction in itself implies dialectic. Dialectics means conversation, the exchange of opinions. The distinctive thing in Plato's as well as other philosophic doctrines is the assertion that there must be a primary awareness of the whole if there is to be any knowledge.

Kant's doctrine of the a priori is in a way the same as the Platonic, but with one crucial difference.^{xxiv} Since I cannot assume that all of you have read Kant, let us start from something which you all must have heard due to the very fact that you are social scientists. I once read an article on the racial question by a sociologist at this university. He said that we see what we are taught to see. I think this is a gross exaggeration, and for that matter his own enterprise wouldn't make sense if that were true, but there is an element of truth in it. What does this mean? It means that our simple sense perception is always guided by something which does not stem from sense perception directly; there is always a frame of reference. The dog has the same sense perception as we have. He doesn't have color and similar things, but the merely physical connection between the so-called object and the eyes of the dog is the same as that between the same physical object and the eyes of man. But man perceives and this cannot be understood through the percept alone. What is the character of that? Kant's answer was something like this. There is the fundamental structure of the human mind and the categories give meaning, organize, order these percepts. A thing is never merely seen. Plato says something of the same kind, but what is the difference? Plato speaks of recollection.^{xxv} We have some awareness not stemming from sense perception which is stimulated or aroused by sense perception.

Let me try to state it again from the most familiar notions. Every understanding takes place or means to integrate percepts into a frame of reference. I believe this would be admitted by many social scientists today. Or do I use terms that are wholly unfamiliar to social scientists?

Student: They are very applicable.

LS: I think so too, although I am not very familiar with the literature. There are *n* frames of reference. The frame of reference of a Tahitian is entirely different from that of someone else. These frames of reference thus have something arbitrary. Human communication as well as other more important demands of man demand that we go beyond these questionable, arbitrary frames of reference to the necessary frames of reference or *the* necessary frame of reference. This is the meaning of science. It supplies a frame of reference which in principle can be common to all men as men. Now there are two ways of conceiving this natural frame of reference, if I may call it this for the moment. One is the Kantian way, the other the Platonic way. Kant says there is a natural frame of reference which is given by the structure of the human mind. This implies the distinction between the thing in itself and the phenomenon. This whole perception or understanding through this natural frame of reference is relative to man. The Platonic assertion is the opposite. This natural frame of reference is identical with the inner order of the whole. We are by nature aware dimly of the essential structure of the whole. This is expressed by Plato figuratively by the statement that we all have seen this essential order of the whole prior to our birth. This is the mythical formulation and not meant literally. What Plato regards as a matter of fact is that we do have such an awareness of the essential structure of the whole. In other words, there exists an essential kinship between the human mind and the essential, true structure of the

^{xxiv} Consider Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* B1-6 A1-2.

^{xxv} Plato *Meno* 81c5-86c8; *Phaedo* 72e3-77a5.

whole. If there were no such kinship knowledge would be altogether impossible. This is the difference between Kant and Plato. Both agree I would say on the point that without a preconception, without a necessary and true preconception, knowledge would be altogether impossible. No accumulation of facts or abstractions would ever lead us to universals. This can easily be seen if you speak of abstraction in general. It is true that you have to abstract. We all have to abstract, but in what direction? You must abstract from the unessential. Can there be such an abstraction without an awareness of the essential?

Student: I don't really see the difference between Kant and Plato in the matter of the limits to human knowledge.

LS: I tried to explain this previously. Both admit the empirical fact that we do not possess complete knowledge of the truth. But what is the difference? For Kant there exist assignable limits to human knowledge. Only phenomena can be known; the things in themselves, as he calls them, cannot be known. For Plato there is no such line clearly separating the knowable from the unknowable. There are always levels and we cannot define a limit to human knowledge. There are no principles known to us by which we could establish such a limit. This is the first difference. Let us consider a further point. In the phenomenal world, we have according to Kant in principle perfect knowledge. As science progresses every phenomenon can become thoroughly understood. No fundamental problems can arise here because we know the fundamental character of any possible scientific explanation. Plato would say that even if you divide this into the phenomenal and the transphenomenal there will be areas of darkness and obscurity in the phenomenal as well as the other. Kant would indicate that there is a sphere of complete light on the one hand, a sphere of complete dark on the other. Plato would say no. There is darkness on both sides to some extent.

Student: One of the later thinkers has suggested that everything we know is known to us. In one respect this seems beyond dispute, although it would appear circular in the last analysis. Is it perhaps [the case] that Plato leaves open one more possibility?

LS: I think you get into difficulties on that level. While these phrases we use are perhaps no longer in use, it is clear that they played a significant role in modern philosophy up until about fifty years ago. On the one hand, you have the subject and on the other the object. This is the fundamental distinction with which they started. Then we apply the sieve principle: every possible object must comply with certain conditions. By knowing these conditions, we know by implication every possible object. But the difficulty here is that eventually you have to admit that the subject, far from being *the* origin from which everything can be understood, is dependent on the objects. This was a point that Marx, for example, made against Hegel.^{xxvi} All these things which are done by Marxism, psychoanalysis, and so on want to bring out those non-conscious things, those merely being and not-conscious things, which determine the conscious things. But you don't have to go into any detail with such theories. The main point is that knowing man is in infinite ways dependent on the whole to which he belongs. I think it was the tendency of all typically modern philosophy, Descartes and Kant especially, to find in man an absolute beginning. I think this leads to the very consequences that are avoided by Plato. Plato does not

^{xxvi} Consider Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right,"* trans. A. Jolin and J. O'Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967, 1977), 56-57, 64, 136-137.

give us a complete systematic presentation as Kant and some others have done, but perhaps this is not the highest consideration.

Student: It would seem possible, however, to say that there is a possibility that all knowledge need not have its origins in man—to leave this open as a possibility—and yet at the same time to say that perhaps it may be the case that all that human beings know is knowledge relative to the human understanding. It is possible, moreover, that the order which the human understanding puts or finds in things does correspond to the order of the things in themselves.

LS: But if it does, then there is the Platonic solution. In other words, either the a priori—that by virtue of which we interpret any percept and which precedes logically any understanding or perception—is merely human or it is really the grasp or the divination of the essential order of the whole. The former is the Kantian position, the later the Platonic. I don't see any alternative. Unless you deny the necessity of an a priori in either the Kantian or the Platonic sense I see no alternative. Of course, this would have to be investigated.

Same Student: But there are people who say that Plato's distrust of ordinary sense perception—

LS: What does this distrust mean? It means that the sense perceptions give us only essentially impermanent data. Understanding, then, has to be of a non-sensory character. This is the whole character of the distrust. Plato wouldn't say that because we find sensory perceptions to be unreliable for certain purposes that we must disregard all senses. He would never do that. It can thus be only the mind and not the senses which can disclose truth to us.

Same Student: But how does this order get into the mind? Plato seems to raise all kinds of difficulties at this point and his final explanation seems to rest on myth.

LS: What is mind? You might say that mind is awareness of essential order. As far as this is concerned the Platonic view can be stated as follows. Man is a microcosm; man is that being which is open to everything. Men contain, as it were, all forms of being possible. He is a brute to some extent, and yet he has also something superhuman in him.

There was another point that I wanted to mention, which may prove helpful for part of the problem. This is what Plato says about arithmetic. Consider 522d to e (volume 2). In connection with this passage I would like to recall to your attention that we have already seen one art which is really universal. You remember that in the first book it was suggested that the art of moneymaking was universal because every art is accompanied by the art of moneymaking.^{xxvii} The true art, that which accompanies all arts, is arithmetic. In every case, you have to count. To continue this particular passage: in the play, one of the characters is presented as having invented numbers. What Socrates says here is that numbers cannot have been invented. The use of fire could have been invented, but not numbers. Why? Because numbering is coeval with man. Man had to have the faculty of numbering before he could invent anything. Why is that so? To have a mind means at least to be able to discern, to distinguish, and to take together. This is a leg; this is another leg—that is numbering. It is impossible that man as man had ever been unable to do that. The fact that some people or tribes do not have numbers beyond five is absolutely irrelevant

^{xxvii} Plato *Republic* 346d1-e3.

because they don't have any need for that. Perhaps they will have to make some arrangements for expressing a larger quantity, but this could be done any number of ways, e.g., by saying many. But the possibility of counting higher if you can count to five is obvious. So this is one example that Socrates uses here to indicate that certain awarenesses are coeval with the human mind. To have a mind means to be able to number. How far this numbering is developed and the subsequent operations with these numbers is a secondary thing. The possibility of counting is implied in mind.

The question which you raise would be connected with the question of the origin of man. If the visible universe was always, then there is no question of the origin of man; they were always here. I believe this was Plato's premise. But if this is not the case then we must turn to another answer, e.g., the biblical notion, the evolutionistic notion, and so on. But who can say that he knows? Still this does not deal with the origin in this sense, i.e., of the material and efficient causes we may know, and yet this leaves us with the primary question, that of the formal cause. We cannot possibly explain the origin of the mind if we do not know first what the mind is. This is the simple meaning of the Platonic doctrine of ideas.

There are many additional passages which should be mentioned, but let me give you just one as food for thought. When he speaks of the five studies—arithmetic, geometry, solid geometry, astronomy, and harmonics—he mentions the idea of the good only when speaking of geometry.^{xxviii} I think this is worth thinking about. He also has a casual reference in 534d to the irrational numbers. This was probably the greatest event in mathematics up to Plato's time. What does this mean? It means that it is not possible to have a complete coordination of being and number. A body is necessarily limited by a plane and a plane by lines. Now if there are lines which are irrational as far as numbers are concerned, there is then an essential limit, at least here, to a certain crucial form of rationality. I think this point is of the greatest importance for the emergence of Platonic-Socratic philosophy and for the break with earlier thought. As to the place where Socrates skips over from geometry to astronomy and only as an afterthought remembers to consider solid geometry, I think I mentioned something of this before.^{xxix} I think this throws light on the *Republic* as a whole, this forgetting of the body as body. Solid geometry deals with the body and I think this abstraction from body is of crucial importance.

Student: [inaudible]

LS: Not quite. I think I stated that opinion is in the highest case sense perception.

¹ Deleted "the."

² Deleted "to see."

³ Deleted "will."

⁴ Deleted "both."

⁵ Deleted "Kant's."

⁶ Deleted "is."

^{xxviii} 526d7-e7.

^{xxix} 527c1-528b3.

Session 12: May 9, 1957

Leo Strauss: —[in progress] [There is] an example of this in a story by Balzac. On the one hand, you have a Napoleonic officer, a man living in the splendor of the Napoleonic victories, who is very much concerned with women and with other enjoyments of life. He ruins his whole family. He is a nice fellow, but he ruins his whole family. Now his son becomes a very strict man, a very tight lawyer, and perfectly correct in opposition to that bad model of the democratic man. This particular novel is a masterpiece for other reasons, but let me call it to your attention as an illustration of this other point at this time.ⁱ

Now let us turn to that in a somewhat more coherent fashion. We¹ [are] at the beginning of the eighth book. Right at the beginning (543a) we have an enumeration of the things which have been established before. Three points are mentioned first: (a) community of women; (b) community of children and education; and (c) community of pursuits in war and in peace. The fourth part, communism regarding property, is mentioned separately immediately afterwards. At this point the translator makes one of his sage notes, that strictly speaking this applies only to the guardians. Aristotle missed the point; Shorey does not miss the point. But if one thinks a bit, I think it is clear that Aristotle had a very strong point.ⁱⁱ Let us examine this. It is clear that the pursuits apply only to the soldiers, because the pursuits of the soldiers and the pursuits of the farmers and artisans are clearly distinguished throughout. Thus one could indeed say, as Shorey says, that the communism of the women and children is limited to the upper class. But there is a further difficulty. This difficulty consists in the transfer of children. If you find a golden child in the lower class, he must be transferred to the upper class. But look at the difficulty that arises: This child is at least known to his parents; he may even be old enough to know his parents. This creates an impossible situation. So if you do not get complete communism, then some people will know their parents and this will prove fatal to the overall scheme. Socrates is well aware of this. The ambiguity is in Plato. Aristotle is quite wise in pointing out that it is undecided as to whether the communism applies only to the upper class or to the whole. Aristotle has thought a bit about this rather than confining himself to what is explicitly said. This is the first point I wanted to make.

I call your attention to another part of the statement—[the] reference [to] the community of pursuits in war and in peace. Shorey suggests that this concerns the pursuits of both men and women although there is no basis for that in the text. The text leaves this open. Certainly, however, the fact that this is in *war and peace* and not in *peace and war* is of some significance. What are the common pursuits of the soldiers in peace? Of course there is the matter of education, but their education is finished at a certain point. What do they do after the completion of their education in time of peace? In war they fight, [and] in peace?

Student: They train and keep in practice.

ⁱ An apparent reference to the characters of the Baron Hector Hulot and his son Victorin in Balzac's novel, *La Cousine Bette*.

ⁱⁱ Aristotle *Politics* 1264a11-b6.

LS: More important, however, they police. Socrates is very delicate not to emphasize this point.

Student: What about the reference to war and philosophy as opposed to war and peace here in the text? On the basis of the translation it would appear that there are two basic pursuits, making war or philosophizing, and that not to philosophize is to make war.

LS: In a way this is true, but let us stick to the text for a moment. The philosophers of course philosophize if they do not rule. But what about the soldiers? This is the question. What do they do in peace? This is not elaborated. It is certainly true that they will devote some of their time to keeping fit and preparing for future wars, but their specifically peacetime activity—the activity not directed toward war or preparation for war—is [to] police. This is to be expected. How can you expect these people, who have never gone through this wonderful education given the soldiers and others, to obey unless there is something there that makes it prudent to obey? This is delicately played down, but it is certainly there and Socrates knew it.

Let us look at the text at 543c: “that we thought it right that none of them should have anything that the others now possess.” In general, then, in the perfect city these others, as distinguished from the soldiers and so on, will also not possess anything in private. I think this is a reference to complete communism. When the perfect city is established, none will have what the others—the non-Platonic guardians at the present time—now possess. I feel this is an allusion to the complete communism in the Platonic city, although it is difficult to offer conclusive proof.

In 544c he indicates that there will be five kinds of regimes:

- (1) aristocracy
- (2) timocracy
- (3) oligarchy
- (4) democracy
- (5) tyranny

Does the number five in itself suggest anything in the *Republic* itself? Where did we find the number five in a most visible way?

Student: The studies in preparation for philosophy.

LS: The preliminary studies. The regimes are in a sense sub-philosophic even if the philosophers rule. We understand this because the philosophers don't like to rule, this is not their primary interest. Now here he mentions Crete and Sparta, as praised by the many, first. This is a clear sign that Plato was not simply an Athenian reactionary. You know the situation. There are two parties everywhere, whether powerful or powerless—a democratic party and an oligarchic party. The oligarchic party look to Sparta and the democratic party saw its center in Athens. Plato has a certain sympathy with the oligarchic party to which he belonged by virtue of his origin and his family, but he, as this simple example points out, never identified himself with it. Here it is praised by the many. This is never a recommendation as far as Plato is concerned. You see here that he says they have names, but no name is given to the Cretan and the Spartan. They are simply called Cretan and Spartan, but these are not names properly speaking. How would this be called by these gentlemen who are in favor of Sparta?

Student: The best.

LS: Aristocracy. This is certainly a most unbecoming name for it. Thus Socrates doesn't give it a name. The name aristocracy would be misleading here, and thus Socrates will coin later on a special word for that. In [544]d here it is pointed out that the other kinds of regimes are not located in a clear or lucid shape, form, *eidos*. Moreover, they occur also in barbaric tribes. These others are indistinct and also occur in barbaric lands. What is the connection between clarity and distinctness and Greek character? They appear to be entirely different and unconnected characteristics: Greekness and distinctness. Is it not strange? I think it has something to do with a subject we have discussed before. There is something Greek about the clear forms, shapes, and characters. There was a passage last time that I neglected to mention that might prove of interest here.

If you turn to page 213 in Shorey's text, 536b, Socrates says here, in Shorey's translation: "Justice herself will have no fault to find with us." I mentioned this same idea in connection with the more visible example, that of Victory. She also is a goddess. I think we must bear this in mind if we are to understand the interlocutors in the dialogue. When Socrates speaks of right or justice itself, this suggests primarily the goddess called Right. There is thus a kind of vulgar preparation in this Greek notion of a goddess Right for the understanding of an idea of right or justice. Thus in the ordinary Greek understanding or language there is a certain preparation for what Plato is to call ideas.

Now let us return to our passage here, 544d to e. The characters of men are the origins of regimes. That there is a certain coordination between a social order or regime and characters of men is not very strange to say as long as it is interpreted properly. Every regime is correlated to a preferred human type. But why should the characters precede the regimes and be their origin? I think the link is supplied by the thought that the ruling type—a type characterized by a certain character—is the ground of the regime. We can understand the regime only by going back to see what that type is. Take a simple case, that in which a martial, landowning class rules. In another place, we have priests ruling. You understand the most important thing if you look in the one case at this martial landowner and in the other case at the priest. You do not understand the "real stuff" by looking at the institutions, because the institutions reveal their meaning only if you see the preponderance of what human type they are conducive. The institutions are as unintelligible in themselves as any other mechanism devoid of true meaning. The mere institutions are meaningless if you do not look at the soul and character they are meant to foster. In the sequel he makes clear how the character of the general discussion will be developed. He will always discuss the regime first and then the individual. Why this order? Why does he not begin with the character?

Student: We have pointed out earlier that the individual qualities may be more visible in the larger sphere, the sphere of the regime. We can see them more easily there.

LS: In other words, he follows the general procedure of the *Republic*: the *polis* first, and then the individual. I think this is a good point, but if the individuals are the ground and the regime the consequence would it not be better to begin with the individual? Or could one say that the wisest

procedure is to begin with the most obvious and then to ascend to the more hidden? This may make sense. If you would speak today about democracy and communism, the simplest and primary answers would be those in terms of institutional differences: free elections or no free elections, independent judiciary or no independent judiciary, and so on. Then we would ascend and ask ourselves what this really means. If you had a complete list of the institutional differences between the United States and Soviet Russia, you begin to understand only what they do to man. You cannot exclude these external facts, but the other things are more difficult.

In the immediate sequel, 545c to d, page 245, we find a passage of interest: "Come, then, said I, let us try to tell in what way a timocracy arises out of an aristocracy." This is a point which I believe most commentators take for granted, and yet it is a wholly unwarranted new step. Granted that there are these various types of regimes or that various types of regimes exist, why should they arise out of each other? I think it clear that we can draw up these lists of the various type of regimes, the good and the bad ones, and so on. Aristotle does this, but Aristotle never says that they arise out of each other. Why this genesis out of each other? This appears to be a crucial problem.

Student: Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that here Plato is presenting several types of men rather than types of regimes, and this division in turn rests on a division of the soul.

LS: But there is no necessity to say, for example, that a miser has emerged out of a perfect stage. Of course, you may feel that miserliness is the crowning virtue, but Plato doesn't seem to say this.

Student: It would appear that change is necessary in every state except the perfect state, and thus their nature is to change in this fashion.

LS: But decay takes place in every case.

Same Student: Even in the case of the perfect state?

LS: Certainly. That is the point. But why should all these others emerge out of it? This is such a shocking imposition on us. The utmost that we have heard up to now is that the best city is possible and nothing has been said that it ever existed in fact. Now we shall understand all actual regimes as having emerged out of that.

Same Student: There doesn't seem to be this sense of historical development here.

LS: But why should the *eidos* of a timocracy have emerged out of the *eidos* of that? The question is still with us. Why is this genesis, even among the ideas, necessary? Let us keep this in mind and turn to another point for just one moment. When Plato speaks of individuals here, he speaks of ordinary individuals living in ordinary cities. On the one hand, we have the individuals and their decay; on the other hand, we have the regimes and their corresponding decay. But these individuals are not members of any particular regime but rather of any ordinary regime, so that the wise man is a member of an ordinary regime. It may be a democracy, a timocracy, or what have you. Similarly, the timocratic man does not belong as described to a timocratic regime. The

aristocratic man would correspond to the aristocratic regime, but the aristocratic man as described lives in an ordinary city and not in the best regime. Let us take this a little further. Are there not all kinds of human beings visible in every social order?

Student: But it doesn't appear to me that the argument runs in this fashion.

LS: This is a question we will have to consider as we go along. For the present we must concentrate our attention on the following question: What is the meaning of the fact that the relation of the two regimes is presented in the form of a genesis of the lower out of the higher? This is the first question we must consider. This genesis is necessary under one condition: if the best is the first. If the best is the first all less good things necessarily have come out of the best. What he implies in this section is this. Previously we have learned that the best is possible. Now he says that the best regime is not only possible but necessary. It must serve as the necessary starting point of the whole development. When you see in 547b (page 249) that he calls ³[the best] the "original regime," this takes on some meaning. The Greek word here also has the meaning "old"; archeology, for example, is derived from that. But the word has the primary meaning of beginning, initial, and this sort of thing. This is really the original then. Now why is that so?

You remember that at the beginning, book 2, the first city, the vegetarian city, was called *the* true city.ⁱⁱⁱ Now this has certain other implications, but let us mention only one point of importance at this stage. The first city is the true city. The true is the first. The beginnings are necessarily perfect. This is of course not Plato's last word on this subject, at least from the point of its political implications. But what drives us in this direction? What Plato describes here particularly clearly in the case of the individual is crucial. Who is responsible for the decay of that nice man's son?

Student: A woman.

LS: I'm sorry to say that is true. The trouble begins with a woman. Does this remind you of a similar tale? I'm not speaking of your private experiences, but rather I am thinking of a somewhat more widely known affair.

Same Student: Eve.

LS: But let us consider the idea of the perfect beginning. Why recommend this proposition so much?

Same Student: Perhaps in order to understand decay you have to understand what it is decaying from.

LS: But this does not necessarily mean that the beginning is perfect. It might be said that everything is less perfect than the highest principle, that the element of decay enters in this fashion, but this does not mean that the beginning of the human race is perfect. I think we must always start from the subject—justice—when confronted with such problems. Why is the

ⁱⁱⁱ Plato *Republic* 372e6.

reflection on justice inclined toward the proposition that the beginnings are perfect? Let us make an experiment. Let us start from the opposite premise: that the beginnings are imperfect. Let us even take the extreme case, the Hobbean proposition of the war of everybody against everybody. This is really the most imperfect beginning you can imagine. What is the consequence of that?

Same Student: To go back to this last statement, do you mean by the beginnings being perfect that everybody already has what is his?

LS: Let me take it in a very general way. There is nothing to blame and nothing to be dissatisfied with. Consider the state of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They did not even need rain because they were so close to these many rivers. I think one can state it as follows: if the beginnings are imperfect, man is compelled by his situation to be rather uncharitable to his fellow men. You don't have to go as far as Hobbes in this respect, but the point is still present. The individual is in extreme and dire need, and the possibilities of kindness are considerably reduced. If this was the beginning of man, and if man got out of this sort of thing by his own efforts, the inevitable consequence is pride. We licked that—these beasts, these bad conditions, and so on. Moreover, if that is the beginning, it is bound to have effects in unexpected places later. The fact that a being had a bad or imperfect beginning will always show in all kinds of situations later on. There is a kind of heritage stemming from that imperfect beginning.

Let us put it this way. In order for a man to be completely responsible for his acts of injustice, he must have had a perfect beginning. I think this is the thought of the Bible and the thought of Plato as well, although it is qualified in the case of the latter. Plato does not accept the biblical solution. What Plato thought about the beginnings of man you see most clearly in the *Laws*, books 3 and 4. His notion of the beginnings is a little more sensible than that of Hobbes—everyone lying in a foxhole—but still very harsh and terrible. This leads to certain consequences.

Student: What is the nature of this perfection or this perfect beginning? Is there something that lies behind it—a cause or something of this nature?

LS: Plato would certainly say that this perfection towards which man aspires must *be* somehow. To give only one provisional answer to your question, consider the end of book 9: the city laid out in heaven.^{iv} It is indeed Plato's assertion that if there were not perfection somehow, say independently of men, there could be no human perfection. But this, on the other hand, does not mean perfect beginnings for Plato. Perhaps you have to enlarge the concept of beginnings, and say that the beginning which must be perfect is not the initial stage of man but the order of the whole—the true beginning.

But the question which continues to confront us here is why this comparison of the four regimes is presented in the form of a genesis from one to the other. This makes sense only if the best regime is the first regime in fact. That in its turn is linked up with this notion that what is first in the past was perfect. All imperfection is due, to use biblical language, to man's sin.

Student: Hasn't the earlier discussion in the *Republic* demonstrated both the possibility and impossibility of these perfect beginnings?

^{iv} 592b2-6.

LS: Strictly speaking, it has not been demonstrated that the perfect city is possible. What has been shown is only the possibility of philosophizing. If you say philosophizing is the perfection of man, then this has been shown, but nothing more than this has been shown. It has not been shown, for example, that philosophizing can ever become completed and in this sense perfected. It has been shown, furthermore, that philosophizing is possible only if there is something permanent and comprehensive, which as such is essentially comprehensible or intelligible.

In the immediate sequel (page 245) there is another passage related to this main point we are discussing.^v Every regime changes by virtue of disunion in the ruling class or ruling parts. This is admitted as the premise. From this it follows that a disunion within the aristocracy must be the origin of timocracy. Now a further question arises. How is this disunion within the aristocracy possible? Socrates must show how disunion among these angels, these perfectly wise men, is possible? But this leads us on finally to a further question. Can there be an absolutely perfect regime? An absolutely perfect regime would be incompatible with the possibility of any decay. In other words, the decay of something perfectly good is impossible. This being the case, it becomes unnecessary to question the principles as to whether the general political rule here stated—only by disunion within the ruling class can the revolution take place—in detail. The simple reason is this. There is always disunion in the ruling class. There are always dissatisfied princes or capitalists or what have you. The statement is so general that it is meaningless. The crucial point is that there cannot be, for deeper reasons, any absolutely perfect regime. This is certainly true.

Student: Is it true and necessary that the beginning was perfect or is this something like the noble lie; that is, is it simply suggested because it is good for the people to believe this?

LS: It is a noble lie, but this is still not sufficient. Why this noble lie and not other noble lies? The reason lies in the thought of making man fully responsible. If this is the situation, then he must be the cause of evil. The alternative would mean that, to use theological language, in one way or the other God is the cause of evil. To put this in the Aristotelian language, although it is not an Aristotelian teaching, this would mean that matter is independent of the formative, creative activity. Man would thus be excused to some extent by this other element. In terms of the history of religion we could use the word Manichaeism.^{vi} This Manichaeism is only a popular form of what is implied in the Platonic-Aristotlelian position. This implies that there is something that is not simply controlled by a rational principle and something which explains evil, even moral evil, to some extent. Let us take a further example in this vein. Even if you disregard the crudest level of murder, theft, and forgery, you may see how human beings hurt and harm each other in subtle and deadly ways out of sheer stupidity. I think the world is full of examples of this. Certainly no one can be blamed for being stupid. In the simplistic moral doctrines this is not so strongly emphasized, but I believe it is important to consider. It was always recognized by Plato. You cannot blame certain people for some actions. You can make them responsible for not murdering each other, but this is a massive thing. The real problems, however, are the more subtle and deadly things. It is crucial that sense, reason, intelligence,

^v 545c8-d3.

^{vi} A religion, founded in the third century AD by the Persian Mani, that taught that there are two radically opposed powers in the world: Good and Evil. See Augustine, *Confessions* 3.6-12.

sensitivity, and so on are of great moral importance and cannot be commanded.

But let us go on. The immediate question is how the aristocracy changed into the timocracy. In the sequel Socrates proposes a Homeric account of the decay and the development of timocracy. He alludes to the beginning of the *Iliad*. The Muse should tell how all these miseries came. We need something like this here. But Socrates calls it not only Homeric but also tragic.^{vii} This will be the kind of account he will offer. This will be a playful account. The playful account of the decay is tragic. From this I conclude without any hesitation that the serious account will be comic. Now what could this mean? Let us read the passage here, 549c to d (page 257):

Soc: The origin of the timocratic man is somewhat on this line. Sometimes he is the young son of a good father, who lives in a badly governed state, and avoids honors and offices and lawsuits and all such meddlesomeness, and is willing to forbear some of his rights in order to escape trouble.

Glaucon: How does he originate?

Soc: Why, to begin with, I said, when he hears his mother complaining that her husband is not one of the rulers and that for that reason she is slighted among the other women. And when she sees that her husband is not much concerned about money, and does not fight and brawl in private lawsuits and in the public assembly but takes all such matters lightly; and when she observes that he is self-absorbed in his thoughts and neither regards nor disregards her much, as a consequence of all this she tells the boy that his father is too slack and no kind of a man—

LS: I suggest this is comical. Why? Is it not in itself comical? This man is concerned with serious things, and yet he finds himself blamed by his wife, who is unable to keep up with the Joneses. It is comical in itself, but it has a special comical flavor for another reason, a very personal reason. Who is the speaker? Socrates. We know very little of his wife from Plato—only that Socrates asked his friend Crito to throw her out at the moment of his death.^{viii} But Xenophon gives us some more information, and tells us that she has been the most difficult of all women who have been, who are, and who will be. Moreover, Xenophon tells us that Socrates married her in order to make an experiment. Socrates said to himself when he was very young, “I shall have to get along with human beings, so I had best get the most difficult one.” In the same vein if one wanted to be a rider, he would begin by trying to master the most savage colt. If it is possible to do this, then it would be possible to get along with any horse. So this is the reason he married Xanthippe.^{ix} Needless to say, he was not completely successful in this task. There is something symbolic about this. The failure with Xanthippe resembles his failure with the *polis*.

This particular account offered here is a serious account as distinguished from the Homeric tragic account regarding the decay of the aristocracy, because these things do happen. There never was an aristocracy and thus this other never could have happened. But this other thing does happen, and the man who tells of it knows it better than anyone else. This question of women is extremely interesting, although it can be discussed today only with a great amount of delicacy due to the prevailing opinion. But I believe thoughtful women will recognize the problem here.

^{vii} Plato *Republic* 545d5-e3.

^{viii} *Phaedo* 59e8-60b1.

^{ix} Xenophon *Symposium* 2.10. See also *Memorabilia* 2.2.7-11.

Perhaps the simplest access to an understanding here would be through what they call today so stupidly the merely biological difference between the two sexes. This would explain that women have much greater difficulties to overcome. Take the idea of emotions as an example. This opinion about the differences between the two sexes is not the preserve of Plato or Greek writers alone; it was shared generally by these older writers. You find it in the Bible and in practically all other cultures.

In 546a to d the answer is given. The best regime decays because of the incomplete knowledge on the part of the rulers. They were supposed, as you will recall, to have seen or perceived the ground of everything: the good or the idea of the good.^x We can interpret this as follows. Either knowledge of the good is not sufficient or there is something else. They have also to know the secret of eugenics. Let us state it more generally. Knowledge of coming into being and perishing is as important for successful ruling as knowledge of the permanent and comprehensive. Or—and we must not dismiss this possibility—knowledge of the good includes knowledge of genesis but is for this reason essentially unavailable. Let us state it differently. To use a term which he uses here in 546c in a more limited sense, something irrational, unspeakable, incommunicable is essential to the constitution of the whole. The term used for irrational is also mentioned in the section on geometry.^{xi} I mentioned this last time. The section on geometry is the only section on the discussion of the preliminary studies, moreover, in which the idea of the good is mentioned.^{xii} I sense that the irrational lines or irrational numbers are of crucial importance for this whole hidden speculation of Plato. I say hidden because it has never been clearly presented.

But to come back to this other point: Complete knowledge, the knowledge which the philosophers who are to rule would have, would require or include such knowledge as that of the principle of eugenics. This principle, however, would have to enable you *really* to predict. It would not be enough to know a few laws in this area. You would have to know precisely how the next baby is going to turn out. You would not be able to plan, for example, on the basis of the Mendelian laws. They afford you some idea of what is going to happen, but they leave too many questions unanswered; thus they are of no great practical use. To state it differently, these guardians would need *the* formula which would guarantee perfect control over the next generation of offspring. This formula is not known; this fact is clearly stated. Now I know little or nothing of mathematics and especially Greek mathematics, but a friend tells me that the number involved here is really an impossible number. It cannot be figured out. Thus the mathematically sophisticated man would understand that this is really impossible.

The problem remains one of tremendous importance even today. Think of the ambition of quantifying social science. This is precisely the idea. One seeks a formula or a series of such devices which would allow us to plan the future of society in a perfectly sensible way. I think it is clear that to the present, quantification has yielded only irrelevant data. It is of little significance that they can tell us through these methods several weeks before the election who will probably be elected. I am informed that Jim Farley^{xiii} did this with a fair amount of accuracy

^x Plato *Republic* 540a4-b7.

^{xi} Evidently a reference to 534d3-6.

^{xii} 526d7-e1.

^{xiii} James "Jim" Farley (1888-1976) was a powerful New York politician who served as Chairman of the New York State Democratic Committee, as well as Chairman of the Democratic National Committee and

without the use of such methods. As to the really important questions, the really relevant questions, they give you only a blank check on the future. They promise us that it will be possible. The problem, despite some of the ridiculous claims raised by some people, is a serious one, and one must take these claims, or at least some of them, seriously. Certainly no one at present says that we have such a science. Moreover, I believe that it is suggested that this will never be perfect. There will be an infinite progress, but there will always be a cleavage between science and the equally necessary hunch or intuition. Since we cannot know whether the important things do not lie in the hunch section rather than in the science section, we must be careful to avoid being misled. All things considered this problem is yet to be worked out. Perhaps it is necessary that we begin working it out from both directions. We must consider whether and why this aspiration toward a quantifying social science which is *the* guide to social action is a delusion. The problem was known to Plato. Nothing could be more important, given his scheme, than control of the offspring. A formula is suggested, but the formula is so dark that one can only say no one has ever shown precisely what it means. ^{xiv} —but the problem is whether the non-mathematical things, bodies and souls, can be sufficiently understood in mathematical terms. This is the question. We have seen in the seventh book that Plato had a very high regard for mathematics, but the problem is whether we can have such a formula for eugenics.

But let us turn to another problem which I would like to discuss. In 548c to d (page 253) you see that Plato doesn't give a description of the regime in terms of institutions. He gives some very inadequate reasons for his failure to do so. He says one cannot describe all regimes. But this insufficient excuse only draws our attention to the amazingly unpolitical character of the description of the regimes. Consider the very simple example that this timocracy consists of landowning gentry whereas the productive elements in an oligarchy are merchants and industrialists. This is not brought out with sufficient clarity, to say nothing of the institutional things in the narrower sense. The strange thing which appears from Plato's discussion is that a spirit, say the timocratic spirit, can find an unambiguous expression in institutions. Take the idea of free elections today: properly defined they represent a certain spirit. It seems remarkable that free elections defined in a legal or a sociological way can be the embodiment of a specific spirit. It reminds us of the relationship of soul and body. Certain motions of the soul can find perfect expression in bodily things. By being silent or almost silent about the institutions and so emphatic about the spirit of the regime, Plato follows the general principle of the *Republic*: abstraction from the body. I have referred to this point more than once.

As for the name timocracy, this becomes clearer when we look at the root of the word. The word for property qualification lies at the heart of this. Timocracy reminds us of honor, but it wasn't used in this sense as a political term. It reminds us much more politically of property qualification. Thus the nearness of the Spartan order and oligarchy is concealed and yet alluded to by the name timocracy.

Student: Shorey has a note here to the effect that Aristotle might use the word in this sense.^{xv}

US Postmaster General during the first two presidential terms of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Farley managed the successful 1928 and 1930 gubernatorial campaigns and 1932 and 1936 presidential campaigns of Roosevelt.

^{xiv} There is a break in the tape here.

^{xv} A reference to Shorey's translation of the *Republic*, vol. 2, page 243, note c. Shorey refers to Aristotle

LS: Aristotle would say that Sparta is a certain kind of aristocracy or polity. He doesn't call it timocracy.

Same Student: There seems to be a difference in terminology here between Aristotle and Plato when speaking of a timocracy.

LS: This is simple. The Aristotelian scheme is that suggested in Plato's *Statesman*.^{xvi} In the *Republic* Plato had other intentions. I think one reason for that is the reference made earlier in the course to Hesiod.^{xvii} The consequence is that democracy belongs to the heroes. What is concealed in Plato and alluded to only by the reference to Hesiod is that democracy is in a way as good as the best. We know in which way. The best kind of man is possible in a democracy.

Student: This listing conceals or abstracts from the whole question of monarchy.

LS: No. He says that aristocracy may be one or two.^{xviii}

Student: On this point it may be that Plato is arranging them according to the spirit involved whereas Aristotle was making his arrangement according to the number ruling.

LS: But in Aristotle the spirit also comes out. Let us now turn to several other points.

In 548d Adeimantus takes over. For a long time Glaucon has been the speaker. This change has something to do with the more pedestrian character of the subject matter: these two ordinary regimes which are now discussed. This change gives an occasion to make a remark about Glaucon's character which is very important to the discussion. Glaucon reminds us of the Spartans, but he is nicer than the Spartans. This is of some importance both for the understanding of this context and for the understanding of the *Republic* as a whole. In 548d he gives us a description of a timocratic youth. Why the emphasis on the youth here? In the case of the oligarchy no mention is made of a youth as such. In the democracy youth is mentioned again. Why is this? I think it is obvious.

Student: Youth is spirited.

LS: There is a love of honor: timocracy; and a love of pleasure: democracy. This is understandable in the case of young men. Love of money is particularly strange to young people. I don't believe the typical miser will ever be presented as a youth, but rather as an oldish man. Aristotle writes something in the *Rhetoric* about the character of the young and the old and mentions that fact that love of money is more located in the older age.^{xix}

We turn now to the question of democracy. This should be of the greatest interest to us. He

Nicomachean Ethics 1160a33-34.

^{xvi} Apparently a reference to Plato *Statesman* 291d1-292a8, 302c1-303b5.

^{xvii} *Republic* 546d8-547a1.

^{xviii} Possibly a reference to 502b4-9.

^{xix} Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1389a14-16, 1389b14-16.

describes first its coming into being. The greed of the rulers in the oligarchy leads them to compel nice men to become poor. The oligarchs are very far from being angels. They spoil and weaken themselves as well as their children. There is no moral superiority of the rich to the poor. This is very clearly stated in 556c. The poor very reasonably despise them. This is important for the understanding of democracy. In 557a he turns to the establishment of democracy. Democracy is characterized by freedom and the development of all human types; whereas all other regimes are characterized by some conformity to one ruling type, democracy is characterized by complete non-conformism and the development of all types.^{xx} This gives rise to a further question, and this is one of the rare occasions on which I think Shorey's notes prove helpful. On page 286 he offers us an observation about American life. What is said here about American life is becoming truer and truer about all democracies. There is only a difference of degree now. This is a very crucial point. Is not Plato's analysis of democracy not utterly wrong? He says that democracy is the non-conformist regime and that all other are conformist. We must face this issue. Two answers are possible. First, that modern democracy characteristically differs from classical democracy and that Plato didn't know modern democracy. The second and perhaps the more promising if one has some prejudice in favor of Plato, that Plato's point of view differed from that of Tocqueville and others. Let us discuss this first. What is the significance attached by Plato to variety or diversity as such? The answer can be given in one word.

Student: He attached no significance to this.

LS: None. What is the reason for this? What is good, according to Plato, for man?

Same Student: Virtue.

LS: Right. There is no other answer possible. This means the same excellence for all men in principle, although in fact there will be an infinite variety of levels, from the top to the most ignoble one. This variety is due to defects.

If man's matter were better and if his institutions were better, then all would have the same virtue. The emphasis on variety and the concern with variety is due to the concern with something other than excellence. This other thing could be called naturalness, genuineness, individuality. From this point of view leveling or conformism is simply bad. From this concern with the genuine or the natural or the individual all conformism, even conformism with virtue, is interference with individuality. Obviously you have to do something to your individuality if you want to comply with one and the same standard. For Plato, the evil is baseness rather than conformism. If conformism were accused by someone, Plato would say, "Conformism with what?" If it means conforming with something bad, it is certainly a bad thing. But if it is conformism with something good, by all means, let us have it. The opposite view is that view which comes to the fore in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Rousseau is probably the primary exponent of this position. Here we have a concern with individuality as the highest good.

Plato says democracy drops all restraint. Hence there is no conformism with good or bad. There is complete toleration of all diversities. But, as he says in 491e, most men have weak natures or

^{xx} Plato *Republic* 557a9-e1.

weak souls with regard to both good and bad. From this it follows that the preponderance of the many, the democratic principle, would lead to the preponderance not of evil but of a low sort of mediocrity. Conformism on a fairly low level could be understood perfectly on the Platonic principle. But Plato was more concerned with what one could call theoretically an early stage, a stage where there is no conformity but rather perfect variety, individuality. In a later stage, speaking theoretically, this would lead to conformity on a lower level. Plato did not draw this conclusion, because he did not see modern democracy. I think this is quite clear. Thus we must raise the following question. What are the characteristics of modern democracy of which Plato was unaware? What characteristics distinguish ancient democracy from modern democracy? Why was ancient democracy not conformistic in the way in which people now say modern democracy tends to be conformistic? I think this is a necessary question. Let us enumerate these points. Enumerating is always very good when you don't see your way. Just jot down the points involved.

Student: Are we sure that modern democracy is conformistic?

LS: This is also a very necessary question. I am inclined to believe it has a very strong tendency toward that. I will give you one example. When I was a child, a long time ago and in a very backward country, there were very strict differences among women regarding dress. A grandmother had to look like a grandmother; a girl of seven had to look like a girl of seven. You know today that a great-grandmother looks, if she can, like a young woman of twenty. A girl of twelve tends to look like a girl of twenty. Is this not true? In spite of the law that there could be a perfect variety—in taste, age group, and what have you—as a matter of fact we see a kind of convergence to a preferred type. In a way, this preferred type is wisely chosen. This is one thing, although one very visible thing. I think there are many signs of this. Consider the changing character of the magazines. In the late nineteenth century, there were a number of magazines available that offered a number of contradictory viewpoints. These have given way to a more popular and less thoughtful type. You might say there is an economic reason behind this. A certain class was formerly able to subscribe to these other journals, and this class is no longer so numerous. But whatever the explanation offered here, I think we can see the picture as a conflict between quantity and quality.

Look at the problem in the schools. If you have millions of college students, you cannot have, even if you are a terribly wealthy country, the same quality of college teaching you would have if you had a smaller number. The number of really good teachers is amazingly small. This number does not increase in proportion, the same proportion, as the number of college students rises. I am sure that we may exaggerate at times about the matter of leveling, but certainly there is something to it. I think the mere fact that there is a high degree of prediction possible is a sign of this. If there were very highly developed individuals, thinking for themselves, this wouldn't work. The samples wouldn't work in this way. I think there is something to this. I think it wise that you raise this question, and it certainly deserves careful consideration. The criticisms on this point are mostly made by Europeans or Americans who have lived in Europe. We find that the forty million French, to take them as an example, have very different manners and food predilections and so on from the Germans, the British, and what have you. Within the countries themselves there are also considerable subdivisions. I believe this to be much more so than in the United States, although I have never been in the South. I have been to California, however, and

have seen the drugstore as a national institution. I do not believe that you would find such an institution present throughout all of the Europe. It may be that this is coming in Europe, but it will be of American origin. I'm almost certain that there is something to this conformism, although there is a tendency for it to be exaggerated. There is always this snobbism that one has to fight. I think you know what I mean here. There are people who will never be happy until the late eighteenth century England is restored in this country. There are such writers; take Kirk^{xxi} as an example. On the whole, however, I think one cannot question the existence of this tendency in the United States.

Let us now turn to the question of what are the obvious differences between modern and ancient democracies. Let us enumerate some of the quite external and visible things.

Student: Size.

LS: Yes, but I was thinking of some even more massive things. Consider labor and the condition of the sexes. Think also of the position of the centralized government as against a more direct democracy. Consider the former preservation of the natural differences between town and country. It is characteristic of modern life that this difference becomes more and more invisible. Consider religious homogeneity. There are the gods of the city-state. Philosophy and science are strictly private matters. There is no technology to speak of. In looking at these characteristics we see that some of them apply not only to modern democracies but to any modern regime. The question is not simply ancient democracy versus modern democracy but rather modern, advanced life versus ancient life as a whole. Let me leave it at this point.

As for Plato's criticism of democracy, Plato makes it quite clear in 557b that there are men of the best kind in a democracy. Nothing of this kind had even been said of another regime. In the sequel he gives an extremely exaggerated account of the lawlessness under a democracy. There is no question that this is grossly exaggerated. This is especially true when he describes the men who have been condemned to death and walk around as though they were invisible. Socrates's own fate shows that Athens was not so mild. There is a further passage, 558a (page 289) where he speaks of the mildness of the condemned. He does not speak of the mildness of democracy. In other words, he does not say that the democracy does not condemn men or punish and persecute them. Of course it does. Since persecution, harshness, and so on are not exactly the same as lawlessness, these passages throw some light on the exaggerated character of the description. The democratic man comes in in 558c (page 293). Consider the passage here. Here Socrates raises the question of origin. He did not raise this question in the case of the other regimes. What is the consequence of this? Why describe the democratic man in terms of his origin rather than in other terms? Who is the democratic man? As described in terms of his genesis?

Student: The spendthrift son.

LS: The spendthrift son of a stingy rich man. But what would have been the answer without any sophistication? Who is the representative man in a democracy? Take the case of the ancient democracy.

^{xxi} A reference to Russell Kirk (1918-1994), a writer and political theorist most famous for *The Conservative Mind* (1953).

Student: The common man.

LS: But especially the man who works hard: the farmers, the artisans, these men in battle who look down on the tenderfoot rich men. The simple representative of democracy is the common man. By deducing the democratic man from the oligarchic man, a kind of type appears as the democratic man which is not clearly what we would suppose to be the democratic man. I do not deny that this has certain other advantages. Plato can then say that the human representative of the democracy is the universal man, the man of all trades. Just as democracy tolerates all kinds of diversity in the whole, he, the democratic man, tolerates all kinds of diversities in himself. This makes a certain sense, but it is at the same time very misleading about the character of the democracy. You must also mention the preponderance of the common man if you are to offer an accurate description. This is avoided by this device.

In the sequel there is a digression on the difference between necessary and unnecessary desires by virtue of which all good desires are classified as necessary. I have mentioned the point before that this leads to the consequence that the necessary desires, i.e., all good desires, are called moneymaking desires. The others are called spendthrift desires. This is the oligarchic point of view and certainly not Plato's. Plato thus indicates to us that his criticism is oligarchic and not aristocratic. Why does he do that? There are certain rules for which solid proof does not exist. One of these is that what is in the center of an enumeration is most important. I have always found it true in reading Plato. Oligarchy is not the best, but it is most important in the context.

If you would read Aristotle's criticism of Plato's *Laws*, you would see that Aristotle rejects the scheme of the *Laws* because it is too oligarchic for Aristotle's taste.^{xxii} Plato has some oligarchic tendencies. There is an admission of the very great importance of wealth. Plato wrote sequels to the *Republic* in which he describes the true city of the *Republic* as it has once been actual on earth. In his description of this earlier time he points out that the citizens combined two virtues. They were wonderfully virtuous and wonderfully rich.^{xxiii} In order for the city to be real, it has to somehow be rich. What does Plato mean here? I think it is a hard-headed judgment that the wealthy as wealthy are crucially important in the society as a stabilizing force. For example, wealthy people, at least in a precapitalistic society, are not as given to gambling as the indigent. The indigent have nothing to lose. This says nothing of the fact that there are certain moral qualities, as Plato points out, which are engendered by the very fact of wealth, e.g., prudence, absence of frivolity, and so on. It is clear, however, that Plato is speaking only of a moderate wealth. An overwhelming wealth may prove as corrupting as anything else. The higher middle-class, then, is an extremely important part of the state. Plato was not blind to their defects, and yet it was clear that they supplied, to use a term much used in the late nineteenth century when these issues were before the country, the ballast to the ship of state. We have seen these points raised with reference to the question of universal suffrage. If you approach political affairs with this orientation, it is clear that you will not agree that all should possess the suffrage equally. This is precisely what Plato does in the *Laws*. He gives more votes and voting power to the rich than to the poor.^{xxiv} Let me emphasize that Plato had no blindness about the sordid elements that

^{xxii} Aristotle *Politics* 1266a5-30.

^{xxiii} Plato *Timaeus* 23c3-27b6, *Critias* 109b1-112e10.

^{xxiv} *Laws* 756b7-757d1.

accompany wealth. He makes this very clear. Politically speaking, however, he thought that this was in a way the center of the polity. This is not the situation in the perfect polity. As we have seen, there would be no private wealth there. But the perfect polity, for reasons we have partly discussed, is impossible.

There is one further point about democracy which I would like to mention. It may supply food for some thought. In 560a to d (page 297) Plato notes that a certain sense of shame distinguishes the oligarchic soul from the democratic soul. There is a certain reverence, restraint, sense of shame, and so on. What is characteristic of democracy? The dropping of this restraint. This is described in very strange terms (page 299). The coming into being of democracy is presented as the coming into the open of certain mysterious cults which opposed the old-fashioned sense of restraint. I think an interpretation of this might supply us with a more significant key to Plato's understanding of democracy than these earlier gross exaggerations. There is no question that Plato's indictment of democracy as stated here is grossly exaggerated. One is certainly entitled to ask, however, why he overstates the criticism here.

Student: Perhaps to denigrate it.

LS: But why does he identify himself with the oligarchy to some extent? I have given one reason: the fact that he regards the oligarchic element as the stabilizing element. Ultimately, however, I think we will be driven to the same reason we found in reading the *Gorgias*. It is less the question of the demos in the political sense than the demos in the philosophic sense. In the latter case, demos means the non-philosophic. Thus Plato can sometimes present the case as one in which philosophy [is] versus democracy. There is the love of the demos as against the love of philosophy. Consider the beginning of the Callicles section in the *Gorgias*.^{xxv}

Let me mention one further point before we conclude the session. I think if one would go behind the differences between ancient and modern democracy listed earlier, you could understand the difference more adequately. Let us take the first two items: slaves and inequality of the two sexes. What has taken place in modern times, and this is certainly true if we look at it theoretically, is an emancipation of the individual as individual. Sex and other differences are irrelevant. The expectation is that this would lead to an amazingly rich and varied individuality. The problem is that this emancipation of the individual as individual seems to lead to the destruction of individuality itself. This is true too if we may take this leveling indictment to be correct. This latter point proved to be one of the observations of Tocqueville. The argument was that an equality of all individuals will lead to a preponderance of the weak individuals.^{xxvi} These individuals are compelled, because of their inability to direct themselves by themselves, to follow models, preferably easygoing models which are outstanding in some way. The models chosen would not be on a high level. Certainly the absence of slavery and the equality of the two sexes have played a part in this development. The enumeration above was entirely a provisional one, and designed only to indicate which points would have to be considered in order to see the difference between modern and ancient democracy.

^{xxv} *Gorgias* 481d1-482b2.

^{xxvi} See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, part 1, chap. 2; part 4, chaps. 3, 6.

¹ Deleted "being."

² Deleted "to."

³ Deleted "this"

Session 13: May 14, 1957

Leo Strauss: You said, if I understood you correctly, that here in the ninth book [is] the model for speech about justice that was not given in books 2 or 3.ⁱ Is this correct? I think this is a very good point. If you remember, toward the end of the discussion on education it was pointed out that we could not give this until we have found out what justice is.ⁱⁱ The discussion of justice was completed in the seventh book, and at the beginning of the eighth book Homer is mentioned very emphatically as such a poet.ⁱⁱⁱ I would suggest that this point be kept in mind in thinking about the first part of the tenth book. Here poetry is again discussed. While this question has never occurred to me in the past, I think it would be worth considering how far the discussion of poetry in this tenth book is prepared by the discussions as a whole in the preceding two books.

The second point I wished to make, although I do not know the Platonic passage you have in mind, is in connection with your remark that in the first two bad regimes, the timocratic and oligarchic regimes, there was an open avowed desire and a secret desire. Is this based on a passage in Plato?

Student: Yes.

LS: You then raised the question about democracy; there seems to be only an avowed desired. You wondered what the secret desire would be here. But what conclusion would you draw from what happens after democracy as to that secret motive in democracy? There is a desire to rule.

As to the third point I wished to raise, here I believe that you have made a mistake of considerable consequences. There is the suggestion that the democratic man is between lawlessness and liberality. I think this is wrong. He is between lawlessness and illiberality. This is crucial. In the passage he is the son of an illiberal father, a stingy moneymaker, and his friends are lawless, clever fellows. He settles in the middle; this is neither illiberal nor lawless.^{iv} The democratic man is moral and from this there follow infinite conclusions.

Now we come to your most interesting and important suggestion, that regarding Adeimantus and Glaucon. Could you repeat the beginning of your analysis?

Same Student: Essentially I raised the question why Glaucon was chosen as a judge.^v I began with the definition of the judge offered in the second book: that he must learn or know evil, although not by experience in his own nature.^{vi} It might be suggested that Adeimantus is more corrupt than Glaucon, but there is no reason to suggest that. Socrates praises the divinity in both

ⁱ The session began with the reading of a student's paper. The reading was not recorded.

ⁱⁱ Plato *Republic* 368b7-c3, 392a13-c5.

ⁱⁱⁱ 545d5-547a7.

^{iv} 558c11-562a3.

^v See 576b7-577b9, 579c3-580b7, 582a4-583a9.

^{vi} 409b4-c1.

their natures.vii

LS: But is this sufficient? That they were very admirable young men in any ordinary sense of the word, there can be no question. The question is more subtle. Let me remind you of something I said before and perhaps we can establish a link here. There are a number of suggestions in the *Republic* that Adeimantus is more moderate than Glaucon, and that Glaucon is more manly or courageous. With this is connected the thought the Adeimantus lacks a sense of humor. Glaucon likes to laugh. Did you not make the remark that in the Adeimantus section there is no reference to the gods? On the other hand, at the immediate beginning of the Glaucon section several references to the gods occur. Was your remark based on the whole Adeimantus section from the beginning of book 8? If not, it would be necessary to go back and prove that. Your remark about Glaucon is very good and we must not lose sight of it. Whether the rest of your argument is convincing is something else again. I think we can begin with this distinction between the two: Glaucon is manly and Adeimantus is moderate. Now here we see Glaucon coming out as a judge in a very emphatic way. What does Adeimantus come out [as]? We can say as non-judge, but this is not very revealing.

Same Student: Perhaps a spectator.

LS: Now how do we go from here, according to your argument?

Same Student: Glaucon does not really have the experience required of a judge. For instance, there is a certain lack of knowledge about tyrants. Socrates handles this affair by making believe that they have lived among tyrants; thus they are able to judge.viii

LS: I think one has also to look at Adeimantus in order to be fair to Glaucon. Has not Adeimantus shown a lack of judgment in other matters? Consider this caricature of democracy that is offered. Adeimantus loves it.ix There are other signs of this also. But I think we leave it at this and turn instead to a coherent discussion of this section.

Let me mention one other point before we begin that. I call your attention to the fact that not only are these discussions here at loggerheads with what many call political science today, but there is also no language common to what political science does today and what Plato offers here. Is this clear? I would like you to see that there is a connection and a very important connection, although it is not immediately visible: that justice is a term men cannot avoid when talking of human affairs is a matter of daily experience. We don't have to see this in the light of politics. Every one of you who has been graded or has graded knows that there is such a thing as justice and injustice. In all human affairs, the question of justice and injustice arises. There is no difficulty in understanding this, but it should constantly be kept in mind that the question of justice is of utmost political relevance. The characteristic thing of Plato is not that he makes justice his theme but that he says it is impossible to understand justice without speaking chiefly of philosophy—and then going into such remote questions as whether and why solid geometry and astronomy are needed in order to become a philosopher. Do we see something of this in our

vii 367e6-368a7.

viii Apparently a reference to 578c1-579d8.

ix See 561c6-e2, 562c8-563d3.

present-day orientation? Take the most massive quantifying political scientist. Where would this question come up even within his horizon? I think the mere fact that he claims to be a scientist, that he has a certain notion of science and the scientific method, is relevant. It is impossible to develop the theme, scientific social science, without speaking of both society (the *polis*) and science. It comes in this form as well as other forms.

Many people today admit that there is something in a way higher than civil or political society. In our tradition it is more common to see that thing which transcends civil society as society in religion. That religion is an important social factor has to be and is admitted without any hesitation by the social scientists. Let me continue this a little further. There is an amazing parallelism between Plato's teaching regarding philosophy and the biblical tradition regarding something that transcends mere civil society, but there is this crucial difference: the biblical transcendence of mere civil society is connected with a principle inseparable from love of one's neighbor. However this biblical principle might be described, whether love of God, trust in God, etc., it is inseparable from love of one's neighbor. The Platonic "X" transcending civil society, philosophy, has nothing to do with love of one's neighbor as such. It enters only indirectly and accidentally, if necessarily. Secondly, the Platonic transcendence of civil society is essentially dependent on nature or natural gifts. The biblical "X" which transcends civil society does not depend on natural gifts but on grace, election, or whatever you call it. I think this simple observation is of some importance if we are to find our bearings, because whatever else might be said, and an infinity of things could be said, the biblical and philosophic elements combine in the background of our society.

But I come now a bit closer to something that is more respectable in the eyes of the severe social scientist. This is the question of liberalism. Liberalism is an offspring of philosophy, on the one hand, and the biblical tradition, on the other. It is hard to say which element predominates. What is characteristic of liberalism, if we take this word in any serious or precise sense, is something of a question. Now if we return to the beginnings of that liberalism in the seventeenth century, we find very precise formulations. These are no longer used, but it is clear that they are still embodied in it. Present-day liberalism can be characterized by this assertion: that there is something in man and in every man by virtue of which he has an independence toward society. The liberalism which does not admit that is really worthy of no serious consideration. There is something in man by virtue of which man is not wholly subject to society, to majority will, or what have you. I think it is now called individualism, but individualism has a number of meanings and it may be wiser to stick to the use of the word liberalism. In the seventeenth century this liberal doctrine emerged for the first time and found its classic expression. Man fully equipped lives in a state of nature and then enters into civil society. This means that society is a free creation in which those who enter it can lay down the conditions of which they enter society. Society or the state—no distinction was made at that time—is a servant of the individual. The point is this: in the state of nature man hasn't done anything. Man without effort or divine grace has freedom from society. He thus deserves to be respected. This matter of the lack of effort is a new thing. Without effort, that is against the philosophers; without divine grace, that is against the theological teaching. This position can become defensible only under one condition: under the premise that the one thing needful is justice or morality in the ordinary sense of the term, and morality is within the reach equally of all. I think this was the Kantian position. The only thing

that gives man a true worth is a good will. This is Kant's formulation.^x This is equally accessible to all men by nature.

Today all of these things have been blurred, but there may be another way to discern this. Sometimes people call that "X" which transcends the merely political culture. I think they think chiefly of the fine arts and poetry. This is also linked to what Plato calls philosophy and the Bible calls love and fear of God. But again, I think it is clear that there are certain difficulties to be encountered in finding one's bearings in present day discussion. For example, I have heard the word "popular culture." If I am not totally mistaken, it just means entertainment. All human seriousness has disappeared when culture is no longer at least poetry and the fine arts but TV and the comic strips. Still, in the moment that you approach the problem with which the political scientist is confronted and when you approach it with some seriousness, you cannot help coming across identically the same problem which Plato discussed in the *Republic*: that justice cannot be understood if we do not make a distinction between man's social life strictly conceived, and its moral needs and the needs of that in man which transcends it. Whether Plato is right in identifying that transcending thing with philosophy or whether it would not have to be identified in the biblical way or perhaps the Kantian way, presents the most serious question. But if you do not admit this "X" in man you deprive man of the most important stratum in him. Then you must not be too surprised if you arrive eventually at popular culture as the only transpolitical thing deserving strict consideration. I thought it would be good to remind ourselves again that we are not dealing here with ancient history, although it is perhaps no accident that it appears to us initially in the guise of ancient history. Now let us turn to our discussion.

In 562a (page 303) we find the section beginning with a very hard sentence which no one dares to translate literally. "What manner or form of tyranny comes into being?" is the literal translation of the sentence Shorey translates as "Come, then, tell me, how tyranny arises." It is a hard sentence, but we have to translate it as it is. This raises the following questions. Is there a form of tyranny which does not come into being? That there is a regime which does not come into being may seem to be proved by the best regime according to the suggestion made at the beginning of the eighth book. If the best regime is the original, initial regime, then in a sense it might not have come into being.^{xi} Perhaps there are two forms of tyranny, a bad one and a good one. This has been suggested earlier in one of the papers. This is certainly legitimate. For example, in the *Phaedrus* Plato gives a list of nine human pursuits. The lowest is tyranny, but in each case there is a good one and a bad one.^{xii} This leaves us with another difficulty, and I must confess that while I see the difficulty I cannot offer an interpretation for this passage.

Socrates suggests in the immediate sequel that tyranny arises from democracy. The principle of democracy is freedom. We find a very powerful statement in this vein on page 305: "What do you say its criterion to be? Liberty, I replied; for you may hear it said that this is best managed in a democratic city, and for this reason that is the only city in which a man of free spirit will care

^x Possibly a reference to Kant's statement: "Nothing in the world—indeed nothing even beyond the world—can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a *good will*." Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959, 1976), 9).

^{xi} Apparently a reference to Plato *Republic* 547b2-7.

^{xii} *Phaedrus* 248c2-e5.

to live.” With regard to this last sentence, man of free spirit may be seen as whoever is “by nature free.”^{xiii} This is a very revealing statement that the ancient democratic principle implied a distinction between men who are by nature free and men who are by nature slaves. Only those who are by nature free are fit to live in a democracy. Freedom then is a principle of democracy, but Socrates seems to be almost silent about another principle of democracy, a principle which is coeval with freedom in the democratic notion. What is that other principle?

Student: Equality.

LS: He comes to this later, but the whole emphasis here is on freedom as distinguished from equality. If I remember well, although I have not looked this up, Aristotle makes the same suggestion: that freedom comes first and that equality is derivative from freedom.^{xiv} Since freedom without government is impossible, the only way in which you can have freedom is that you rule and be ruled in turn. This means equality. Everyone has an equal access to rule. At any rate, here freedom is the basic principle of democracy, and if we think this through consistently we see that this leads to anarchy. Every government necessarily implies restrictions of some nature on freedom. This thought leads eventually to the destruction of all authority, paternal and otherwise, as is developed in the sequel. What do you think about this analysis of democracy if you take it as an analysis of a tendency or bias of democracy? Is paternal authority weakened in democracy as you know it? What about the position of a teacher in a democracy? If I compare the present experience with that of my youth in Germany, there is of course a considerable weakening of authority. In other words, our experience would seem to confirm that.

But how is it that Lord Bryce, who is quoted here via Harold Lasswell, says just the opposite? Let us read that quotation, page 307, note g:^{xv} “The spirit of equality is alleged to have diminished the respect children owe to parents, and the young to the old. This was noted by Plato in Athens. But surely the family relations depend much more on the social, structural and religious ideas of a race than on forms of government.”

What would you say to that? I think what is obviously inadequate here is the term “forms of government.” For Plato, forms of government are never mere forms of government; regime means the whole social and not merely certain physical governmental arrangements. But this is not quite sufficient. Take a Swiss canton or a New England township: these were really democratic and yet there was very stern paternal and other authority present. There is a question here. How would Aristotle get out of this fix? It may be a matter of extreme democracy. We could say that Plato and Aristotle are speaking of a radical democracy and that there are, especially in backward and simple societies, examples of democracy with an entirely different character. There all these difficulties would not arise. The question is whether this is sufficient.

The crucial point here, if you look at the examples of democracy suggested, is the status of religion. The religious character of these simple democracies makes them in fact, if we may say

^{xiii} *Republic* 562c2.

^{xiv} Aristotle *Politics* 1317a40-1318a10.

^{xv} Shorey cites the American political scientist Harold Lasswell (1902-1978) in *Methods of Social Science*, ed. Stuart A. Rice, p. 376, quoting the British man of letters and statesman Lord Bryce (1838-1922).

so, a mixture of democracy and theocracy. The theocracy does not have to be represented by a special priesthood, but rather may very well be found in the hearts of men. Thus it may be of some importance that modern democracy is secular. What is the strength of this? Was Greek democracy secular? Certainly not. Thus we have a real problem here. We note in passing that when Plato speaks of these different regimes he never makes an observation about the differences between these regimes in regard to religion. I disregard now certain subtle observations which are uninteresting in terms of the broad observation. When Aristotle gives an analysis of the regimes, he takes for granted that there will always be religious institutions and a certain religious spirit. This matter is neutral to the differences between regimes. I draw your attention to this fact because it deserves really serious consideration. The notion of a secular polity which, as *polis*, has no religious institutions, did not exist. I think this is a notion which does not come up until the modern era. This is partly the consequence of the religious wars and the terrific bloodshed that characterized them. People began to look for a religiously neutral society in order to get rid of these effects.

At any rate, Plato contends that if we see the principle of democracy as freedom there is necessarily a tendency toward the destruction of all authority. That Plato did not merely follow his imagination, prejudice, or what not, but that there is a problem here, I think is shown by our present-day experience. Whether this can be traced to democracy proper is difficult to say. Modern democracy is greatly different from ancient democracy, and to establish this other thing would require a long study. When Tocqueville wrote his book more than one hundred years ago there was no reference to this difficulty. The family structure was still wholly unimpaired. You only have to read what he says about the family and compare it with modern American society to see that this is perhaps the greatest social change that has occurred.^{xvi} But let us consider Tocqueville's teacher Montesquieu. What did he say is the principle of democracy?

Student: Virtue.^{xvii}

LS: This means an extreme severity of manners is characteristic of democracy. This is the very opposite. Thus this is a very long question and certainly one worthy of our best attention.

But we must now come back to Plato. After speaking of the parents, he turns to the teachers, page 307:^{xviii} "The teacher in such case fears and fawns upon the pupils, and the pupils pay no heed to the teacher or to their overseers either. And in general, the young ape their elders and vie with them in speech and action, while the old, accommodating themselves to the young, are full of pleasantries and graciousness, imitating the young for fear they may be thought disagreeable and authoritative."

Does this remind you of something? In a really severe, old-fashioned society the young are among themselves and the old are among themselves. Of course the young and the old meet in the family as children and parents, but what about this theme? Here we have older men sitting together with younger men and being pleasant to them.

^{xvi} Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, part 3, chap. 8.

^{xvii} Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, bk. 3, chap. 3.

^{xviii} Plato *Republic* 563a3-b2.

Student: This is the situation in the *Republic*.

LS: So Socrates knows very well that what he is doing belongs to a period of loosened authority. Let us go on.

“And the climax of popular liberty, my friend, I said, is attained in such a city when the purchased slaves, male and female, are no less free than the owners who paid for them. And I almost forgot to mention the spirit of freedom and equal rights in the relation of men to women and women to men.”

Why did he almost forget this? Was Socrates a very stern husband who kept his wife in her place? We know the story; his wife was very domineering. ^{xix} Now what does Adeimantus answer? “Shall we not then, in Aeschylean phrase, say ‘whatever rises to our lips’?”

Is this not strange? To what society does this belong, that you say everything that rises to your lips? Not to an old-fashioned society. So you see that even Adeimantus, this severe aristocratic reactionary, is the son of his age. This is not [a] mere joke but rather indicates an essential condition of this kind of philosophic discussion. In a simply old-fashioned discussion the problem of justice would not arise; everyone would know what justice is. Justice would be to do what is ancestral, what your ancestors did before you. Only if the ancestral becomes shaken does the question of justice arise. To this extent it is true that philosophy belongs to democracy. Still we must not conceive this too narrowly. It does not have to be a politically democratic society.

Now let us follow the argument in 564a, page 313.

Soc: And in truth, any excess is¹ [wont] to bring about a corresponding reaction to the opposite in the seasons, in plants, in animal bodies, and most especially in political societies.

Ad.: Probably, he said.

Soc: And so the probable outcome of too much freedom is only too much slavery in the individual and the state.

Ad: Yes, that is probable.

Soc: Probably, then, tyranny develops out of no other constitution than democracy—from the height of liberty, I take it, the fiercest extreme of servitude.

You see here the constant reference to “probable.” This makes it perfectly clear that this is not meant to be a demonstratively and literally true proposition. Even if it were true that the extreme of liberty leads to tyranny it does not follow that only the extreme of liberty leads to tyranny. The Athenians had an experience with tyranny. Do you remember that? One must remember that in order to understand this discussion. Who was the famous Athenian tyrant? Everyone knew of him and of his existence some hundred years before this. Out of what regime did he arise? Oligarchy or aristocracy^{xx}—certainly he did not come out of a democracy. In other words, every child in Athens knows that this statement is untrue. Adeimantus does not remember that. This

^{xix} See Xenophon *Symposium* 2.10; *Memorabilia* 2.2.7-11.

^{xx} An apparent reference to Peisistratus, tyrant of Athens from 561 to 527 BC. See Herodotus 1.59-64; Aristotle *Politics* 1305a15-28, 1310b9-31; *Constitution of Athens* 13-16.

does not mean that he is stupid; it means that he is terribly prejudiced. Prejudice blinds them and keeps them from remembering the most obvious facts. Needless to say, what is true of Adeimantus cannot possibly be true of Socrates and Plato. But why does Socrates overstate the case against democracy by saying that democracy is the *only* breeding ground? One could even say that democracy is a necessary and sufficient condition for tyranny. Why this gross overstatement? There is one superficial reason, and we may leave it at this for the time being. Socrates wants to do something to Glaucon and Adeimantus. They must be presumed to be men of political ambition. By depreciating democratic political life and the potential of democratic political life, i.e., tyranny, we move toward the conversion from political life to the philosophic life. While this is not sufficient, it is a fact we must never forget. But let us continue from where we stopped.

Soc: That, however, I believe, was not your question, but what identical malady arising in democracy as well as in oligarchy enslaves it?

Ad: You say truly, he replied.

Soc: That then, I said, was what I had in mind, the class of idle and spendthrift men, the most enterprising and vigorous portion being leaders and the less manly spirits followers. We were likening them to drones, some equipped with stings and others stingless.

Oligarchy and democracy have identically the same disease. This class occurs in both regimes equally. What happens then?

Soc: These two kinds, when they arise in any state, create a disturbance like that produced in the body by phlegm and gall. And so a good physician and lawgiver must be on his guard from afar against the two kinds, like a prudent apiarist, first and chiefly to prevent their springing up, but if they do arise to have them as quickly as may be cut out, cells and all.

Ad: Yes, by Zeus, he said, by all means.

Soc: Then let us take it in this way, I said, so that we may contemplate our purpose more distinctly.

Ad: How?

Soc: Let us in our theory make a tripartite division of the democratic state, which is in fact its structure.

You see by this division that not every tripartition corresponds to the truth. This tripartition makes sense in the case of a democracy, but we can also make such divisions elsewhere where they are not true. Consider the division of the soul. Perhaps this applies here, but this is something we have to investigate. Now what is the tripartition? The common people, the rich, and the impoverished rich. These latter are called the “drones.” Let us follow the discussion in 565a. What does he say about the common people? “And the third class, composing the ‘people’ would comprise all quiet cultivators of their own farms who possess little property. This is the largest and most potent group in a democracy when it meets in assembly.”

Nothing could be truer than that. This is really the description of a democracy. This is what Socrates says. Now listen to what Adeimantus, the reactionary, answers: “Yes, it is, he said, but it will not often do that, unless it gets a share of the honey.”

Socrates accepts this and goes on, but the suggestion is made by Adeimantus. In the sequel Socrates makes it clear that it is not the common people themselves but the demagogues who bring about the persecution and the milking of the rich. Let us read this, 565c (page 319).

Soc: And then there ensue impeachments and judgments and lawsuits on either side.

Ad.: Yes, indeed.

Soc: And is it not always the way of a demos to put forward one man as its special champion and protector and cherish and magnify him?

If we read this in the context of what has gone immediately before, we see a suggestion which is immediately suppressed. The rich are in danger of being made bankrupt by the poor. Then they really get anti-democratic, which they were not before. They get a leader who tyrannically suppresses it. This is suggested and it is perfectly legitimate. Something like this happened in 403 during the period of the Thirty Tyrants. Socrates or Plato indicates to us the line of a truly adequate analysis of tyranny.^{xxi} Tyranny can arise from a democracy, but it can also arise from an oligarchy. This only shows how ironical the unqualified indictment which is given here is. In the sequel (page 323) the genesis of tyranny is completed.

Now we turn to a consideration of the genesis of the tyrant as distinguished from the regime. Later we turn to the manner of being or the being of the tyrant. In 567c he gives us the description of the classic tyrant, or rather the classic description of the tyrant--the enemy of gods and men, hated by everyone, living in perpetual fear of assassination and so on. He gives an indication here of the people who hate the tyrant or the people whom the tyrant hates. This is given on page 325. "He must look sharp to see, then, who is brave, who is great-souled, who is wise, who is rich; and such is his good fortune that, whether he wishes it or not, he must be their enemy and plot against them all until he purge the city."

Four human qualities are singled out as particularly dangerous to the human tyrant. There are four cardinal virtues. How are these four qualities related to the four cardinal virtues? This is a simple arithmetical problem. Just remember the fourth virtues and compare them. Which of the [four] virtues occur here and which do not?

Student: Moderation and justice are missing.

LS: In other words, the moderate and the just as such are not feared by the tyrant. The brave and wise are. This is a simple process of subtraction or addition. Now we have to understand this. I think it is fairly clear why the brave and the wise would be feared by the tyrant. The brave wouldn't fear death and the wise would be clever in finding out how to get rid of him. But why are the moderate and the just not dangerous? The moderate would restrain themselves, they would never get angry, and so on. And the just? I think the solution is in a narrower notion of justice. Consider justice in the sense of obedience to law and in the sense of keeping contracts. A tyrant may well preserve this sort of justice, where people buy and sell, and so on, without any interference. I made some notes on this subject in *On Tyranny*, pages 56 to 57.^{xxii} Here we have

^{xxi} Aristotle *Constitution of Athens* 34-35.

^{xxii} Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1950).

an indication of the qualities of people who can be subjects of a tyrant; not only what is so obvious (criminals and gangsters who are more likely the companions of the tyrant than his subjects) but the fact that the subjects are characterized by what is a relatively low kind of virtue. A lot of experience has been accumulated in Europe during the last two decades about this problem.

Later on, 567d (page 327), he says: "Blessed, then, is the necessity that binds him, which bids him dwell for the most part with base companions who hate him, or else forfeit his life." He does not say "with base companions" but rather "with the many base." But "base" must here be rightly understood. Base is not a good translation.^{xxiii} These many inferior are those of ordinary decency who hate the tyrant but who would never be able to do anything against him. These are not men who would sacrifice everything in the cause of justice; they are simply people of ordinary decency. This does not require great effort. They would be perfectly capable of being subjects of tyrants even though they might hate it.

Student: There seems to be the suggestion that justice should be seen in the terms suggested by Thrasymachus.^{xxiv}

LS: There is something of this here. This becomes clear by the very fact that it had to be transcended. Now in 568a to c (pages 327 to 329) it is pointed out that these average, nice people have a secret hate of the tyrant but publicly they bow to him and accept him. These men, and I believe this is the meaning of the passage, are the addressees of tragedy, which is characterized by the same features. There is a secret hatred and a public acceptance. Whether Plato is right in this analysis of the tragedy is another matter.

We come now to book 9. In the beginning, 571 to 572, I think he presents what is the key to an understanding of the argument of the ninth book. When I say "key," I mean literally the key and nothing more. We cannot go to sleep but have to use this key in a wide-awake state. Socrates reconsiders here the distinction he had made before between necessary and unnecessary desires. According to this there are those desires that are really necessary—food, drink and so on—and those that are good, noble, beneficent. He calls these the necessary or the moneymaking desires and distinguishes them from the spendthrift desires. I said at the time that Plato looks here at the desires from an oligarchic point of view. The overriding consideration is moneymaking or spending. Now he makes a different distinction. He mentions here one kind of the unnecessary or spendthrift desires and he calls them the illegal desires. What he has in mind here is Oedipus. By considering some spendthrift desires as lawless he admits that there are some spendthrift desires which are not lawless. As a result, he abandons the oligarchic orientation underlying the first position. A spendthrift desire might consist of taking a trip to see beautiful sights—no money is made by that, except for the travel agency. This is not lawless.

But what is the new point of view? In 571c to d he speaks of a bipartition of the soul into the rational and the bestial or brutish part. He says in this context that in dreams the rational part of the soul is asleep. This corresponds to common sense. Some part of your soul, the vegetative part, is alive; your digestion is going on and so on. In 571d to 572a he reintroduces the

^{xxiii} The Greek word is *phaulos*.

^{xxiv} Plato *Republic* 338c1-2.

tripartition of the soul: desire, spiritedness, and reason. Then he makes the following strange remark. In the case of the good man, the desire and spiritedness are quiet in sleep, whereas the rational part is awake in sleep. This leads to the consequence that we have this rational man, who has subdued the lower parts by proper diet and so on, having true dreams. He divines the truth in his sleep. Moreover, he suggests that such a man apprehends truth to the highest degree. What is suggested is that *the* way to *the* truth is dreaming. But it should be noted that it is the dreaming of the wise man, the man who has quieted the lower parts of the soul. What can we say now? I think we can give a formulation, although the formulation is in itself only a statement of a problem. Plato does not replace the oligarchic point of view by the simply true point of view. This is not feasible in a Platonic dialogue. He replaces the oligarchic point of view, which identifies the necessary desires with the moneymaking desires, by a point of view which is characterized by belief in dreams as the source of truth. This is the fact. What it means is another matter.

The remarks of Shorey, if judiciously read, can be useful here. For example, on page 337 in the long note he says: "Many of the ancients, like some superstitious moderns, exalted the unconscious which reveals itself in dreams, and made it the source of prophecy." This list could be infinitely long. Plato did not share these superstitions. But Plato accepts this superstition, if you call it a superstition, now. This is the characteristic qualifier of the argument here just as the oligarchic equation was the qualifier of the preceding point. Does this make sense?

In 572c (page 341) there is a passage we should read:

Soc: Now recall our characterization of the democratic man. His development was determined by his education from youth under a thrifty father who approved only the acquisitive appetites and disapproved the unnecessary ones whose object is entertainment and display. Is not that so?

Ad.: Yes.

Soc: And by association with more sophisticated men, teeming with the appetites we have just described—

Which does he mean? Does he mean the desire to sleep with one's mother and kill one's father and eat human flesh? Or does he mean the desire for play? I have not read this passage in Plato about Oedipus and so on because this is an extremely well known passage in Plato since the introduction of psychoanalysis.^{xxv} Let us continue: "he is impelled towards every form of insolence and outrage, and to the adoption of their way of life by his hatred of his father's niggardliness. But since his nature is better than that of his corrupters, being drawn both ways he settled down on a compromise between the two tendencies, and indulging and enjoying each in moderation, forsooth, as he supposes, he lives what he deems a life that is neither illiberal nor lawless, now transformed from an oligarch to a democrat."

The oligarchic father respects only moneymaking desires. His son has a better nature; I take it to mean a better nature not only than his corrupters but also than his father. He is full of desire for play and for what beautifies things. He associates with more subtle men than his father. He arrives at a moderate way of life which is in between the illiberality of his stingy father and the

^{xxv} 571c3-d4.

lawlessness of these subtle companions. In other words, we can say he is exactly that man of whom we have spoken before, the man who has merely justice and moderation in the ordinary sense of the word. He is now called the democratic man. We remember the description of the democratic man as the drone, the demagogue and so on. The democratic man is really the man of ordinary decency, the man who would also be a subject of tyrants if fate so decrees. This *demos* is, as he has pointed out before, the generator of tyrants. Although they are free of any tyrannical desires, in a very strange way they generate the tyrants. This is the problem of the present discussion. Thus the discussion is really reduced to the question: Democracy or tyranny? This does not mean simply two kinds of regimes; it means now the *demos*, as something which exists always and in every regime, and its morality. We can say the *demos* is the seat of ordinary morality. This must be transcended. There are two ways in which this may be transcended, one of which we have seen: philosophy. But there is another way in which it may be transcended. This is tyranny. The deeper problem, then, is the *demos* and the alternatives to the *demos*[’s] orientation or morality. One of these is philosophy and the other is called tyranny. We have to understand what this means.

Before we go on, let us recall one thing I hope was made clear in our discussions last time. To identify Plato with this atrocious indictment of democracy is unintelligent. Plato does this for certain purposes. The question to which we now turn: How does the tyrant arise from the democratic man thus understood? The democratic man here is simply the man of ordinary decency. Now let us look at 572e (page 341).

Soc: And suppose the experience of his father to be repeated in his case. He is drawn toward utter lawlessness, which is called by his seducers complete freedom. His father and his other kin lend support to these compromise appetites while the others lend theirs to the opposite group. And when these dread magi and king-makers come to realize that they have no hope of controlling the youth in any other way, they contrive to engender in his soul a ruling passion to be the protector of his idle and prodigal appetites, a monstrous winged drone. Or do you think the spirit of desire in such men is aught else?

Ad: Nothing but that, he said.

Soc: And when the other appetites, buzzing about it, replete with incense and myrrh and chaplets and wine, and the pleasures that are released in such revelries, magnifying and fostering it to the utmost, awaken in the drone the sting of unsatisfied yearnings—

Does this remind you of something? One must not hesitate to think of all kinds of outlandish ideas in order to reach eventually ideas that are not outlandish. We found last time (560e to 561a) when he described democracy, he used the language of the mystery cult. Here he speaks again of similar things. What does this mean? Let us start from the following observation. What is the character of the tyrant as he is described here? What is the root of the matter? Eros! The tyrant is eros incarnate. Another term is also used in connection with that: madness. The tyrant is the erotic madman. This is emphasized constantly. What does it mean? This is probably not intelligible on the basis of the *Republic* alone. One has to consider another dialogue, *Phaedrus*. The *Phaedrus* deals with eros. Eros means love, although it has the wider meaning of desire. In the *Phaedrus* eros is traced. Some run-of-the-mill orator had written a praise of eros, but of moderate and sober eros: You should be moderate and sober in your love. Socrates finds that this is an insult to love. Thus he praises mad love, the madness of love. This is where you find the

famous statement that madness is the origin of the greatest good which Greece has ever received.^{xxvi} What does he mean by this? As is the case with every Socratic statement, this is a riddle and must be interpreted. What is the true eros according to Socrates?

Student: Philosophy.

LS: And philosophy cannot be moderate. This is impossible. For example, if you call a thinker a moderate thinker you already have an absurdity. You can have a moderate drinker but not a moderate thinker. Philosophy is essentially unlimited and doesn't recognize any limit. But here in this work in the *Republic*, we have an indictment of eros. In the name of what?

Student: Justice.

LS: That is the point. This is one of the important poles in Plato's orientation. Justice and eros. Plato can show, as he has shown, that justice in its perfect form is identical with philosophy. Then the conflict does not appear. But if we proceed in a less mad and more sober manner, we may encounter a certain opposition. Let me give a simple example. Perhaps the best formulation of the idea of justice is to love thy neighbor as thyself. It is a problem for Plato how we could love those we do not like. The Bible makes this point; Plato regards this as impossible. Thus a distinction must be made between spontaneous love and compulsory love. This compulsory liking, this compulsory concern with other human beings, is justice. We must remember this in connection with the scene in the cave, the relation of the philosopher to society. The *Republic* takes the position of justice so radically that the tyrant, the opposite of the philosopher, is identified with eros.

Now what about this passage in 574b to c? Let us consider this briefly. What is the support of this common morality? Let us take an ordinary man in Greece, a man of good will who wants to do his duty. The question of the gods enters. What are these gods? Either they exist—and if they do the question is settled by this very fact—or they do not exist. If they do not exist but are creations of the human mind, what in man creates them? If this morality might be supported philosophically, then we would have one solution. But if this is not feasible, we see that it is too weak to support itself. Thus there must be guardians of justice who are visible to everyone. Are the Greek gods simply guardians of justice? Let us limit ourselves to Zeus. As a guardian of justice, it would mean that he has the power to punish and to reward. But why is this not sufficient, to say of Zeus that he is the guardian of justice? Think only of the stories about Zeus. How did he begin his career? This was developed at great length in the second book.^{xxvii} He did the most horrible thing a man can do. He deposed his own father. In other words, Zeus is also terribly unjust. He is a very intemperate person if we may use the evidence presented in the second book.

But what is behind this? We cannot leave it by simply saying that these were strange stories that the Greeks told to each other. Why did they invent these stories? What compelled them to say that the guardian of justice is also very unjust, although they didn't call this unjust? There must be some sense in this. What necessity is behind the fact that Zeus is regarded as the guardian of

^{xxvi} *Phaedrus* 244a5-8, 256a7-b7, 265b2-5, 266a6-8.

^{xxvii} *Republic* 378a1-d7, 379c2-380a4.

orphans and strangers, classic cases in which injustice is easy? Let us go back to the beginnings, the Freudian beginnings. There is something very terrible in man according to Plato. This shows in all decent men only in sleep, and if they are very decent only barely in sleep. These same men, men who have suppressed these things so that nothing happens when they are awake, still have these things at the bottom of their souls. When they are awake, they are decent and think only of decency, and in this capacity they need a guardian of justice. Human justice is not strong enough to make justice enforced. But what is the source of their knowledge of the gods?

Student: Dream sensations.

LS: Dreams will play a role. But what happens in dreams? These things which are condemned, and very reasonably condemned, assert themselves. The gods are the dreams of men in both senses, their awake-dreams and their dreams proper. This is a part of the story, among other things. Something of this kind is suggested. I am inclined to think that the analysis of the demos and the tyrant here in the eighth and ninth book also fulfills the function of making intelligible the relation between ordinary morality and the gods. This has nothing to do with the problem of the gods in a philosophic sense. Plato has discussed this other point in the *Timaeus* and other places. I think this is the background to these references to the gods in this section. Let me suggest a further interpretation. Gods are not mentioned in the Adeimantus section because of Adeimantus's moderation. While I do not assert this, it could also be true. But we have to leave it as this for the present.

¹ Deleted "want."

² Deleted "fourth."

Session 14: May 16, 1957

Leo Strauss: —[in progress] [You are] accepting at its face value the final statement that poetry is permissible only to the extent to which it praises or presents the virtues in the strict sense. ⁱ I do not believe that this is sufficient. If this were the full story, why these difficulties—for example, that Socrates was so completely attracted by Homer?ⁱⁱ How could a perfectly virtuous man, at least in the Greek sense of the term, like Socrates be attracted by something fundamentally vicious? This must be considered.

In the major part of book 9, Socrates gives proofs of the unhappiness of the tyrant, of the unhappiness of the completely unjust man. Let me repeat only the main points of the first. The argument was based on the parallelism between the tyrant himself and the tyrannically ruled city. Since the tyrannically ruled city is the most unhappy city, and since this parallelism between individual and city is correct, the tyrant must be the most unhappy of men. This limits the proof in one way. The tyrant who is so absolutely unhappy is the actual tyrant and ⁱ the man who has tyrannical desires. Only by actually ruling as a tyrant is he more unjust and more unhappy than any other man, and in particular than the potential tyrant. The discussion ended with the remark that this extremely unjust man is unhappy even if his wickedness or injustice remains concealed.ⁱⁱⁱ You may remember that this was the great issue of Glaucon's question in the second book. Here it was pointed out that those who praise justice must show that justice is happiness, injustice unhappiness, even if justice and injustice remain concealed. Otherwise it could be that the just man derives his happiness from the rewards and the unjust man his unhappiness from the punishments. It would not be intrinsically so.^{iv} Here the proof is not really given: the absolute tyrant is visible as an unjust man. He does not appear to everyone as the incarnation of justice. Thus the proof that injustice unknown makes a man miserable is not given.

With this in mind it becomes obvious that another argument is needed. The second and central one, 580b-583a, is thus of interest. The argument begins by pointing out that there are three parts of the soul—the distinction which is constantly used—to which correspond three kinds of pleasures and three kinds of desires and three kinds of rules. The latter refers to what rules in man: the reason, the spirit, the desire. It is now made clear that the name the desiring or appetitive quality is not adequate. There is desire in every part of the soul. Thus it will be characterized as that part of desire which is characterized by love of money. The crude bodily desires are all greatly facilitated if you have money. Shall I have to prove that, that you get more and better drink if you are richer? It will be called the love of money or the love of gain. The spirited will now be called the part which is characterized by love of victory, honor, or concern with reputation. The Greek word for reputation is the same as that for opinion.^v The highest part is that which is characterized by love of learning or of wisdom. So we arrive at three classes of men: The men in whom the love of knowledge or wisdom predominates is the philosopher; the

ⁱ The session began with the reading of a student's paper. The reading was not recorded.

ⁱⁱ Plato *Republic* 595b9-c3, 606e1-608a5

ⁱⁱⁱ 579d9-e6.

^{iv} 360e1-362d3.

^v Strauss refers to the Greek word, mentioned at 580d1, for example, *doxa*.

second is the lover of victory; and third is the lover of gain. Now is there anything particularly striking here? How many types of men did we have before? What has he done? A simple subtraction. We must not despise these simple arithmetical operations. We had five at first, now we have three. Which two are missing?

Student: Liberty and power.

LS: The democratic and tyrannical man. Why this is so is a question we will take up later.

Student: Is it of any significance that he lists two different classes of objects of these three desires? For example, the highest part aims at wisdom and learning. It would seem that wisdom is higher than or greater than learning.

LS: In other words, you suspect that this is not the last word regarding this distinction. I think this is a sound suspicion. There are passages in Plato in which love of gain, the lowest of these, is analyzed in such a way that it becomes identical with philosophy.^{vi} Can you see how? Consider profit, true profit, the most solid profit: knowledge. These distinctions always have to be taken with a grain of salt. They serve a particular function in a particular context, but one must always think beyond this in order to see how tenable they are in the final analysis. In a crude way, however, the distinction makes sense here. There are those who want riches and there are others who don't want the money as much as the being top man, the being in the limelight. For their purposes, the latter is much more impressive than the possession of a big bag of money. On the other hand, however, there are people who are not interested in either of these two things but want to cultivate their minds. The main point in this section is the silence about the two lowest parts. In the previous discussion, the money bag, while not the most impressive man, was preferred to the mere drone and profligate. Certain moral qualities are needed to keep your money together. We must not underestimate the fact that a certain self-control is needed. To be a profligate, however, no effort is required. One just does what he likes. In this discussion, however, Socrates limits his discussion to the three higher types. Perhaps we will discover the significance of this later. The crucial point is that these three types—the lover of wisdom, the lover of honor, and the lover of money—are examined with a view to pleasure. Which of these three ways of life is most pleasant?

We see another difficulty similar to the one we have been discussing in 582c (page 379). Glaucon says the rich, the brave, and the wise. Thus the lover of money is called the rich, the lover of honor is called the brave, and the lover of knowledge is called the wise. This suggests that the lover of wisdom, the philosopher, is not supposed to be brave too. This indicates another difficulty. If we replace the lover of victory by the brave man, and the wise man is essentially brave, then the joys or pleasures of the second kind, those of the lover of victory, are also present in the philosopher. If you make this crude tripartition you see that they have entirely different pleasures. But this momentary substitution of brave for the love of victory indicates that these other pleasures may very well be present to some extent on the highest levels. This is of some importance for the following argument.

In the sequel, each of the three types argues that he lives the most pleasant life. The question

^{vi} Possibly a reference to *Hipparchus* 225a1-229b3.

arises: Who is competent to say this? Socrates replies that only the philosopher [is]; only he knows the pleasures of the other kinds. But the others are unaware of his pleasures. The philosopher alone is in a position to judge on the basis of experience. Thus the judgment of the philosopher as to who leads the most pleasant life is the most competent judgment. But we must always put this into the context of the *Republic*. If the life of the philosopher is best, and if the philosophic life is the just life, it follows that the just life is best because it is most pleasant. But what about the unjust life? The unjust life must be most unhappy. Is it so? The unjust life as we see it in this connection is the life of the lover of money. In what sense is he unhappy? Nothing is said about his going into bankruptcy or suffering any other such misfortune. But why is he nevertheless unhappy? Why is the lover of money, or for that matter the lover of mere food and drink, unhappy?

Student: He may easily lose it.

LS: This point is not made here. The philosopher may also lose his through sickness or death.

Same Student: Because he lacks the highest pleasure.

LS: I think that is it. In other words, he is unhappy because he is inexperienced in the truly beautiful and noble things. I think we must never forget that this is the central argument. This brings out in the simplest way what Socrates has in mind when he indicates that the just man is the happiest and the unjust man the least happy. It has something to do not with the amount of pleasures but the kind of pleasures. The moneymaking man is not then a man to be hated, but rather a man to be pitied. He does not know what is really the best in life. I remind you of the theme of the *Gorgias* where this was constantly the problem.^{vii} Is the moneymaking man hateful, so that a kind of vindictiveness and revengefulness arises in the just man, or is it rather that he is a creature to be pitied so that his punishment and so on would be free from all vindictiveness? This problem arises here as well as in the *Gorgias*. I note that the problem of the tyrant is not discussed at all in this central discussion. I think you have to figure this out for yourselves, whether what is true of the money lover is not true with minor modifications of the tyrant himself. From a sufficiently broad point of view, it may be that he is an object of pity and contempt.

Student: Can we still admit the possibility of a philosopher who, while he is the most able to judge, would judge against philosophy? Perhaps he would come to the conclusion that ignorance is really bliss.

LS: But would he not by this very fact declare himself to be a fool, a man utterly lacking in practical wisdom? Would he not really have to turn his back on philosophy and become a moneymaker or a bum? If someone reaches the conclusion by philosophy that philosophy is no good (to overstate it) then he still is somehow aware of the fact that without this philosophic argument destroying philosophy he would not have a right to his position or even [have] arrived at it. This would require a very long study, but one must raise the question whether a man can run away from reason. Does this not lead to one kind of absurdity or another? I admit that the argument is shocking when you first read it, but we must remember the place of the philosopher

^{vii} See *Gorgias* 468e6-469c2.

in the *Republic*. He is judge and accuser at the same time. This problem is discussed very humorously in the *Protagoras*, when Protagoras and Socrates have a fight as to what the proper procedure is. Then some other people say they want to be the judges or arbiters. Socrates indicates this suggestion is perfectly ridiculous. In such a case the wisest must judge, and Socrates indicates that these other people are certainly not the wisest present.^{viii} This problem comes up in modern social science. Given the variety of philosophic opinions, who is going to judge? Since the non-philosophers cannot judge and the philosophers are in disagreement, perhaps the best thing to do is to forget about philosophy. This may be a good rule for the tax collectors and so on, but in our case, although the difficulty may be an insurmountable one, we cannot run away from it.

Same Student: The fact that the argument is in a sense prejudiced by the fact that it is being given by an interested party raises the question whether the pleasures are external to the pleased. Someone is to be pitied here even though he is pleased with what are considered to be very poor pleasures.

LS: Let us take the very extreme case. You must have seen morons who are always very pleased; they smile all the time. You could very well say that no other human being could be as happy as they are. If happiness meant merely subjective satisfaction, then happiness would be possible on every basis and on every level. There are people who are subjectively satisfied if they strangle someone. You must have read of such people.

Same Student: Isn't it necessary to establish in some clearer and more distinct sense this separation of the pleasures from the pleased?

LS: Certainly. One can start from the simple notion of what happiness means in vulgar usage. We call a man happy if he is satisfied, but not without adding a crucial qualification. He must be satisfied in the sense that his whole state is enviable. You may occasionally envy him merely for being satisfied, just as you may envy an animal who does not have our worries, our fears, our responsibilities and so on. But once you recover from this momentary depression, you would not seriously entertain the notion that you should be transformed by magic into such an animal. If the decision were really placed before you, you wouldn't accept it. Thus when we speak in ordinary language that so and so is a happy guy, we mean that he is enviable. This doesn't mean that we have to envy him, it means only that he is in such a state that people who are given to envy would envy him. This could take place on all kinds of trivial levels. He may have a very beautiful car. Generally, both satisfaction and enviable are meant to be together when we speak of envy. Envable of course always means something higher. Under this understanding the bum is excluded.

Same Student: On the other hand, if we return to this construction of the tyrant outlined in the earlier chapters, it might be possible to replace him by the philosopher and say that both because of the duties, responsibilities, and what have you piled on them, [they] are to be pitied. The way in which this argument makes the tyrant a man to be pitied might also be used to make the philosopher a man to be pitied. Philosophizing might be seen as a terrible burden.

^{viii} *Protagoras* 334e2-338e2.

LS: But if it is true that the pleasures accompanying understanding are unique and the highest, then the tyrant by definition lacks them completely and the philosopher, despite all these burdens if you wish to call them that, possesses them. The premise here is that there are these pleasures accompanying understanding and insight and that these pleasures are the highest pleasures. This is the premise, but the argument runs as follows. Who is able to judge of the value or worth of these various kinds of pleasures, eating, playing, and so on? Who is competent to judge of all of them? Only a man who knows all these kinds of pleasures. If you take the crudest pleasures, the bodily pleasures, you see that every man or almost every man knows them. We all know what it is to eat food. The pleasures of the man of ambition, the moneymaker, are certainly known to a man of broader and more varied experience. But the pleasures going with insight and understanding do not exist for these other types of man. Thus they don't know what they are talking about. The tyrant can compare all kinds of pleasures—those of the man of wealth and prestige, those of the sensual man, but he is completely unaware of this other kind of pleasure. The only man who knows all the pleasures . . . ix

Same Student: But he also knows all the pains as well. He is in a sense as much to be pitied as to be envied.

LS: The question is whether such pains are not enviable. This question is not considered here, but attention is instead focused on a very narrow point. To answer Glaucon's indictment of justice in the second book, one must show that the just man is as such happy regardless of whether others know of his justice or not. Now the just man has proven to be the philosopher. What does it mean that he is happy? It is implied that he does man's highest job, but what does best mean? Best is here replaced by most pleasurable. What Socrates tries to establish in the central proof is that the philosophic life is the most pleasant life. The argument runs as follows. The philosopher chooses this life. If it were miserable, as sensible men they would not choose it. They see it as a pleasant life. Everyone assumes in some way that his way of life is a pleasant one, unless he be a slave or compelled by some other circumstances to work at unpleasant tasks, and so on. Since there is this variety of values, however, who is competent to judge? If everyone had only his unique experience, no problem would then arise. The problem arises because experience is shared and tastes are communicable so that we can all understand each other to a sufficient degree to offer a comparison. But then we see that the only one who is competent is he who knows all these pleasures accessible to man, even those which are rarest and not accessible to the others. This is the argument.

Student: It would seem that something is being added to the old definition of justice here by saying that the just man is the happy man and that he is the philosopher or wise man. If justice is simply doing one's job, then it would be injustice for the unqualified to attempt to be philosophers.

LS: Can someone describe the way from the just shoemaker to the just philosopher? You must not forget that this constant change from the city to the individual is extremely meaningful. The shoemaker is as just as the philosophic ruler as far as fulfilling the social function is concerned. But we see now that this fulfilling of the social function does not make a man happy. This was the argument at the beginning of the fourth book, when Adeimantus said: You make these people

ix Ellipsis in original. It may mean that a portion of the tape was inaudible.

very miserable. Socrates replied that this was not the major problem.^x Aristotle makes it quite clear in his criticism that the city would not be a happy one. But it does not make sense, as Aristotle points out, to expect the city to be happy if all the individuals are unhappy.^{xi} Happiness is not equivalent to evenness. You can put two odd numbers together and they add up to an even number, but you cannot put unhappy individuals together and expect that a happy city will follow.

Let us come back to the beginning. The fact that the shoemaker is just in that he fulfills his social function does not mean that he will be happy. Now we come to a further question. Is there any social function which as such makes a man happy? The shoemaker might become happy because he has a nice wife, kids, and so on, but this is not shoemaking as shoemaking. But is there not a social function which as such makes a man satisfied? Socrates answers that this is philosophy. Why? Philosophy means that man does the job of man well. In the case of the shoemaker, the highest faculty is so completely uncultivated. In the case of the philosopher, however, the whole life consists in the cultivation of the highest faculty. Thus there is a coincidence of justice in the sense of fulfilling the social function and of personal gratification. This parallelism of individual and *polis* is very cunningly done. Certain things you see only by looking at the *polis* and other things you see only by looking at the individual. The reader must put two and two together in order to see how they complete each other.

Student: I wonder if the just shoemaker is happier than the unjust shoemaker. The latter may make inferior shoes and sell them for as much money as the good shoes, thus making a tremendous amount of profit.

LS: This is a perfectly legitimate question, but under what conditions or condition would he be unhappier? This unjust shoemaker who makes the inferior shoes. Let us be perfectly realistic. How would his unhappiness be brought about? From the point of view of the effort he puts in and the pains he takes with his shoes, we can say that he is happier. But how is the unhappiness to be brought about?

Same Student: He may be punished.

LS: In other words, his unhappiness is necessarily a visible one. Only by virtue of punishment would this man be unhappy. This means that there is no true solution to the problem of the coincidence of justice and happiness on that level except by punishment or reward. There are things which are in themselves rewarding and there are other activities which are not in themselves rewarding. This is a very important element of the Platonic argument. Whether it is a complete analysis is another matter.

Student: Would it not seem that the nature of philosophy would lead the philosopher to seek to become a king or ruler? It would seem that only then would philosophy be possible in the fullest sense.

LS: But these pleasures of ruling are destructive of the pleasures of thinking. What does ruling

^x *Republic* 419a1-421c6.

^{xi} Aristotle *Politics* 1264b15-24.

mean? About ninety-nine percent is administration. I don't say that you don't have to think as an administrator, but on the other hand, you cannot think of these things about which the philosopher likes to think. Let me offer a simple example. The individual may wish to do a very exciting piece of work, but then he gets an offer to become an administrator, academic or non-academic. There are certainly greater monetary rewards in administration as well as others. How important is it to him to do interesting work as against this other work which, while important and respectable, is from the standpoint of the more important things about which a man can think uninteresting.

Same Student: But it would seem that, in order to gain the experience necessary to evaluate these other things, participation in such matters as ruling, etc., would be essential.

LS: You do not have to have much experience in administration and this sort of thing in order to form a judgment about it. It goes without saying that in order to be a successful administrator you have to have this experience. But in order to be a judge of the pleasures and pains involved not much experience is needed.

Same Student: When you speak of pleasures, you seem to indicate that it is a matter of experience rather than a matter of thought about them.

LS: I do not think one can speak competently of pleasures without having experienced them. Perhaps they are so closely akin to the thing you are doing that it may be possible to realize the full effect in this fashion, but otherwise no. For example, a man who has an appreciation of poetry can have some knowledge of what an appreciation of music would mean.

Same Student: I was wondering about this in connection with the earlier example you offered—the idea that the good judge must have knowledge of evils but must not have experienced some of them—that had he experienced them he would not have been able to become a good judge.

LS: He has never done evil deeds, but he has observed them. Would this not give him some idea of the evil motivations and gratifications that lead to these deeds? There may be some people who are so pure that they do not have any knowledge of evil motivations even in the most germinal state, but I would think they would be extremely rare.

Same Student: How may the philosopher be able to judge of the pleasure of evil men?

LS: He has the potentiality in himself.

Same Student: But he has not experienced these things.

LS: In a sufficient way, yes. What are these pleasures? Let us take the pleasure of possessing money as an example. The difference between the ten millions which you add to the one hundred fifty millions you already have is not different from the five dollars which you add to your first dollar.

Same Student: Conversely, could you not say the pleasure the pirate or robber gets in figuring

out his strategy and so on is not different from the pleasure the philosopher gets in thinking through his ideas?

LS: I think there is a difference. In this first case, that of the pirate, if he can make these deliberations entirely separate from his personal needs, then he is a very thoughtful man and has something theoretical in him. This would be a wholly different case already if he could appreciate the beauty of his plan simply as plan. But one might have to go beyond this and see whether there is not an essential difference between such practical deliberation and theoretical thought. Possibly one might turn this thought around and say that some men have experienced this higher level and yet chosen to reject it. They have the competence and yet have chosen not to use it. Thus the argument presented here is not successful in itself. One would have to go into an analysis of the various kinds of pleasures.

Same Student: And this would not be on the basis of simply experiencing them?

LS: True. A whole species of things does not become accessible unless one has experienced them. It would be a question of experience modified or subjected to an analysis of the nature of man. The Platonic point of view can be stated very simply. The primary consideration for choosing the good is the intrinsic goodness. A secondary but by no means irrelevant consideration is pleasure.

Same Student: But what is the real significance of the philosopher if he cannot rule?

LS: I spoke of that on a former occasion. Granted that the suggestion of the *Republic* that philosophers should rule is impossible, is it impossible that philosophy or the philosopher should influence society? The influence may be indirect. I believe the historical studies confirm the fact that such things have taken place. It is entirely possible that philosophy might be an inspiration without being a ruling force. Let us take an extreme view. Philosophy may be seen as a strictly private matter which serves to gratify the individual. But we must recognize that this takes place within society. Even a hermit presupposes society in that he was brought up by his parents. He didn't become a hermit until he reached a certain age. Philosophy, then, is not possible without society. This implies in itself a certain responsibility in the philosopher for society to say nothing of any other considerations. The question is how this responsibility can best be fulfilled without being detrimental to philosophy itself. The answer would be not by ruling, which is an utterly utopian solution, but by being an inspiration. You have an example right in front of you. Socrates talks to these young Athenians. We cannot say how deeply he influences them, because it is impossible to measure such things, but that they can influence such people is borne out by the available evidence. There are politicians who concede that their approach and the measures they sought were influenced by their contact with philosophy or philosophers. For our purposes we cannot even be sure whether Socrates's wife was not affected to some small degree by her contact with Socrates. While it cannot be shown that a direct influence exists, I think that even the general histories concede that philosophy has influenced man.

While it may be agreed that philosophy and the *polis* need each other, I would like to emphasize at this point that there may not be complete harmony between them. I think this is what Plato is pointing out. They certainly depend on each other and yet there is conflict between them. We

must always think about this conflict and not to be taken in by a present-day understanding that such a conflict is nonsense. Consider what the average man is inclined to say about the intellectuals or eggheads in present day society. This is not sheer stupidity on his part but rather a suspicion of a real danger, although this group might have difficulty in expressing it completely. With this in mind the intellectuals should not simply dismiss the criticism often launched at them within the present society. The matter is not as simple as they sometimes think it is. There is a certain earthy stolidity which is absolutely necessary if man is to live. This is certainly not enlightened and not willing to be enlightened, yet without it man could not live. It seems to me that what Plato suggests all through the *Republic* is that an elegant solution valid for all times and places is not possible. The only thing one can say is that these two elements must be there if man is to live a human life. If society has no philosophy but only medicine, this would not be a civilized society. While this may sound shocking today, I think that a hundred years ago everyone would have admitted that. Ultimately the Platonic analysis means that the relation of *polis* and philosophy corresponds to the relation between body and soul. The body is dumb. It has all these mechanisms, digestion and so on, that function excellently, but it cannot listen to reason. It must be compelled, as Aristotle points out.^{xii} At the same time, it has this strange character that it can be an expression of the soul. But let us return to the Platonic argument.

Let us consider the last argument proving the unhappiness of the tyrant or the unjust. This argument is as follows.^{xiii} In the first place, there are pure pleasures, e.g., smell. But the most common or vulgar pleasures are only cessations of pain. When you hunger, you have pain; when you satisfy that hunger by eating you achieve pleasure. In the moment the satisfaction is over, however, in that moment you no longer have any pleasure. It is only a state of painlessness or pleasurelessness. As Plato puts it, pleasure and pain are both forms of change or of motion and the stage in between them is one of rest. The point made here is this: the non-philosophers are unaware of the pure pleasures; at most they reach a stage of absence of pain. He presents a picture. We have that below (pain), that in the middle (absence of pain and pleasure) and that above (pleasure). He says that the philosophers are the only ones who go beyond the middle point. The pure pleasures, those which are not simply satisfactions of pain, are not known to the non-philosophers. I have not the slightest doubt that many things should be mentioned which are not said here. For example, there are pains of learning, pains going with the highest pleasure; for example, when you have forgotten something, and so on.

The crucial point here is the problem of the pleasures of the non-philosophic, decent man. What becomes clear here is that the difference between ordinary decency and indecency is much less important than the difference between non-philosophy and philosophy. Let us recall a simple fact. Even the average schoolboy can tell us that Socrates taught virtue is knowledge. But let us think about that. If virtue is knowledge, and if knowledge is not attainable on the highest level, then the utmost of which man is capable is to seek virtue, i.e., to philosophize. But if philosophy is the one thing needful, the line to be drawn is not that between ordinary decency and indecency, but between philosophers and non-philosophers. This is inevitable. In the early religious experience the line was not drawn between decent men and indecent men, but it was instead drawn between the believers and the unbelievers. This is the same problem. The notion which is quite familiar to us and certainly not unknown to earlier thinkers is that moral virtue as

^{xii} Apparently a reference to Aristotle *Politics* 1254b4-6.

^{xiii} Plato *Republic* 583b1-588a11.

moral virtue is the one thing needful. But this is an opinion which must be examined. It is certainly not self-evident. I admit that the *Republic* creates the impression that the only thing which counts is justice in the sense of what we would call morality. But when we read more carefully, we see what this justice is. It is no longer simply a matter of being honest in business, not lying, and so on. Justice means to philosophize. It is in a way very natural for us, perhaps even indispensable, to identify for practical purposes human goodness with morality. This is certainly the most important practical consideration, but theoretically there are very great problems. I think the philosophers agree with the older religious understanding—although I don't know what the view of the modern liberal theologians is—that moral virtue is necessary but not saving. Saving would mean something different here than in the religious context, but the problem is the same. Moralism may sometimes be used by those who favor the tough approach of Machiavelli, although I would not say this is particularly accurate; I would say that moralism is the view that says moral virtue is the one thing needful. This is the view classically expressed by Kant. This is a very respectable position, but we can be sure that it is not Socrates's position.

xiv

Let me make one crucial addition. In the argument as presented in the ninth book there is no suggestion of the dependence of the philosophic life on the possibility of another life. Did you notice that? It is meant to be true in this life. The difficulties are overwhelming, however, and one would have to go into a real analysis of pleasure and pain, how they are related to human activity, and so on. Much of this is given in the ninth book, but the shortness of the time available to us means that I must leave it at these few remarks. Let me simply make a few comments about the end of the book.

Glaucon draws the conclusion at the end of the ninth book, and this is the measure of Socrates's success, that the just man would not engage in political activity. Socrates seems to qualify this a bit by pointing out that he would go into politics,^{xv} but only in his *polis* and not in his fatherland or native city. Only divine chance or an unforeseen accident might compel him to do so. There may be situations in which he would see fit to engage in the political sphere, but these would be such that his action would not be one of free will alone. Glaucon attempts to save the city that they have founded in speech or on paper by indicating that he would be politically active in the perfect city. Socrates agrees that this city is not on earth and suggests that perhaps a paradigm of it is laid out in heaven.^{xvi} What could this be?

Student: Perhaps that it is divine.

LS: Consider the heavenly bodies. They move in a regular manner, they do not hurt each other or fight with each other as humans do, and so on. It is interesting to note that he speaks of this in heaven and not, as with the ideas, a super-heavenly place. I think we can conclude the rest of the argument in this manner: that justice is philosophy and that justice thus understood is the best. It is perfect bliss in this life. But this justice is radically unpolitical. This is the complete reply to Glaucon and Adeimantus. Justice is fully defensible in this form and only in this form. The argument of justice in the ordinary sense is of a secondary and prudential character. We have

xiv There is a break in the tape here.

xv That is, participate in politics.

xvi 592a1-b6.

already been given an inkling of that, 519c (page 139). The progress of the argument here consists in the omission of believing. The claim raised regarding the argument of the ninth book is that they not only believe it but know it.

Now let us turn to the first section of the tenth book and the immensely important section on poetry.^{xvii} We must first consider the context. The center and peak of the *Republic* is the discussion of philosophy from the middle of book 5 until the end of book 7. What came earlier was an ascent and what comes after that is a descent. The descent is very visible when he speaks of the bad polities. Every child can see that. It is perhaps less visible in the last book, [book] 10, but this too is a descent. This discussion of poetry is sandwiched in between two discussions of the proposition that justice is best. The first discussion of justice is carried on without reference to life after death and the second with reference to life after death.^{xviii} He begins here with a simple rejection of the imitative poetry, which means the drama, as he did already in the third book.^{xix} The necessity for this rejection of dramatic poetry is now much more obvious. The badness of the imitative art is now clearer because of the distinction between the different kinds of souls.^{xx} What does he mean by that? Which distinction and which kind of the souls? There are many divisions. There is the famous tripartition, but there is also the tyrannic, philosophic, oligarchic, democratic soul. We do not know what is indicated here and this is the first difficulty which confronts us. I believe it is the latter, although I can only mention this as food for thought at this time. There was a criticism of tragedy in book 9. Tragedy was rejected because of the fact that while it hates the tyrant it bows to the tyrant.^{xxi} I believe this is a clue to the answer here.

It is pointed out in the sequel that the originator of tragedy is Homer.^{xxii} This means in effect that it is no longer a criticism simply of dramatic poetry but of all poetry. Both epic poetry and tragedy are condemned. What about comedy?

Student: He will consider comedy in a later section.^{xxiii}

LS: Later he will condemn both tragedy and comedy, but in this connection there is no question. There is one further passage we might consider for a moment on page 421. Here we have an instance of extreme rudeness.^{xxiv} I do not believe that there is another passage of such harshness in the whole book. This reflects the rudeness of Socrates to the poets which is now beginning. But there is something else of which we have to think. The rudest remark of Socrates of which I am aware occurs in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. There Socrates really says to Xenophon himself, "You wretch" and "You fool."^{xxv} In the whole work of Xenophon, only Xenophon is addressed in this way. What does this mean? Do we know of a Socrates who is in the habit of using such phrases in speaking to another?

^{xvii} 595a1-608b3.

^{xviii} 608b4-621d3.

^{xix} 392c6-398b5.

^{xx} 595a5-b1.

^{xxi} Apparently a reference to a passage in book 8: 567e8-568d3.

^{xxii} 595b9-c2.

^{xxiii} 606c2-9.

^{xxiv} 595c7-596a1.

^{xxv} Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.3.11-13.

Student: In Aristophanes.^{xxvi}

LS: Certainly. There Socrates's ordinary way of addressing people is in this manner. Let us examine this. Socrates has been attacked at some earlier time, as he tells us. Who began the campaign against Socrates? Aristophanes.^{xxvii} Here was an attack on a philosopher by a poet. Here we have a reply to that and perhaps *the* reply to that. We must not forget that there is a comic element going through the whole thing. Now in order to lay a philosophic basis for the attack on poetry, he repeats the doctrine of ideas. The examples are beds and chairs, artifacts.^{xxviii}

Student: Is it not tables rather than chairs?

LS: That's right. There are three kinds of beds here: the one existing in nature; the second that which has been physically constructed; the third that which has been painted. Painting here stands for all imitative art. All imitative arts imitate imitations. The bedmaker looks at the idea of the bed and makes the bed. This point is clear, but at the same time it is not sufficient. The poet, to take the most important example, imitates an imitation of an artifact. It is really difficult to explain this point in the short time available. Certainly the problem is made more difficult by Shorey's tendency to write god with a capital or a small letter as he sees fit. This makes it difficult to understand what Socrates is speaking of when he uses the word. Let us look at the arrangement we have here. First we have painters, then cabinetmakers, then gods. Just as there is not just one cabinetmaker but rather *n* cabinetmakers, so there are *n* gods. But if we go a step further we see that there can be only one ideal bed although there may be innumerable beds. There can only be one maker and thus only one god. There is the way the argument proceeds there.

But to come back to the main point, the poets are imitators of imitations of artifacts. This is the formula of Plato's criticism of poetry. What does he mean by that? I think you will discover one step in the process if you take page 431, top [597e]. Does this sentence remind you of something? Here you have the king, the philosopher, the poet, and so on. Does this remind you of another list? Do you remember another list beginning with a king, the philosopher king? The five regimes. In this list, the poet would correspond to the oligarch. What can be common to the poet and the oligarch? The analysis here, the view of poetry as imitation, has something to do with the *polis*. The poetic activity belongs to the *polis* in a way in which philosophy does not belong to it. I think there is some significance in these two lists. On the one hand the third from the king is the oligarch, and on the other hand the third is the poet. It would appear that there is a certain parallelism between the oligarch and the poet, although this remains a question. The suggestion we can offer at this stage is simply this. If the oligarch is important to the *polis*, if wealth must somehow be secure if there is to be a *polis*, then we can replace the one with the other and say that the poet and the *polis* belong together.

In 598d this is tested as regards the tragic poets and Homer. Homer and the other poets produce images because they cannot produce the things which they imitate. Let us consider 599c to d

^{xxvi} See Aristophanes *Clouds* 397, 687, 781-790.

^{xxvii} See Plato *Apology of Socrates* 18a7-d2.

^{xxviii} *Republic* 596a5-598d6.

(page 437): “and let us dismiss the other arts and not question them about them; but concerning the greatest and finest things of which Homer undertakes to speak, wars and generalship and the administration of cities and the education of men, it surely is fair to question him and ask—”

These are the highest themes of poetry and political things in the wider sense of the word. The education of men in general is also politics in the wider sense of the word. But now we come to an additional point. Who is, according to the ordinary opinion as well as in a way according to Plato's opinion, the highest political man? What political activity is the highest according to the general notion which is shared by Plato?

Student: The legislator.

LS: By legislator in this context you must not understand a congressman, but rather think of a man like [the one described by] Rousseau.^{xxix} The Founding Fathers may be thought of in this context. If the Founding Fathers were one man, then they would correspond to the legislator in the Platonic sense, the man who establishes the society and gives it its character by the code which he establishes. Perhaps the most simple example would be Moses in the biblical tradition. Perhaps we might also use Lycurgus of Sparta as an example. But to return to the point: Can we say that the poet imitates the legislator? When we think of the legislator's work here we must think of the whole social order and not simply of this particular provision in the legal order. Does it make sense to say that poets are imitators of legislators? This is a crucial step for understanding the development here. There was a modern thinker of not too many years ago who hated Plato and yet understood him in a way better on certain points than anyone else. He stated that the poets are the valets of morality.^{xxx} What is called morality here—that is, the specific social morality of the society—is in Plato's opinion the work of the legislator. This is what Plato suggests. The poet instead of criticizing the present morality is the mouthpiece of that morality. Does this make sense empirically? Take Homer as an example. He praises what is praised within the society and criticizes that which is criticized within the society. There are many other examples of this as well. Let us stop at this point for a moment. The first thing to realize in the argument here is that the poets are imitators of legislators.

The next question is to consider what the legislator imitates. If the poet is an imitator of an imitator, what does the legislator imitate?

Student: Philosophy.

LS: A bit more specifically. Toward what does the legislator look?

Student: The idea of the good.

LS: He looks at justice. But here we are told that he is an imitator of an artifact. He can say that the ordinary serious legislator would look at the best *polis*. He would try to come as close to this as possible. But what is the basis of the best polity? Here the further observation comes in. The philosopher who lays out the best polity looks (1) at the idea of justice and (2) at human justice.

^{xxix} Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, book 2, chapter 7.

^{xxx} Friedrich Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 1.

By looking at the problem in this way he draws up the best polity. The best polity is an artificial or man-made mixture of true justice and merely human justice. The crucial passage here is 501b to c (page 73). If this is so, it makes perfect sense to say that what the poet does by imitating the empirical legislator here and now imitates ultimately the imitator of an artifact and not of an idea in the strictest sense of the term. But who is the artificer of that artifact?

Student: The philosopher.

LS: Now we can bring in the philosophers. The poets imitate the legislators who, if they are serious men, imitate the philosophers. But now there comes an entirely different analysis of poetry, where he does not imitate any artifacts whatever but rather imitates things which are by nature. What are these? In one word, we may say these are the passions. By imitating the passions, that [part of the soul] which is kept down by the legislator, the poet is nearer the truth than the legislator and thus a possible teacher of the legislator.^{xxx} I believe this bears out the thought that Plato, despite the criticism here, was well aware of the infinite wisdom embodied in real poetry. Thus poetry here is the corrective of the legislator. It is a dangerous thing, and thus censorship is needed as Plato would not hesitate for one moment to say. I think we can arrive at much the same interpretation by making an analysis of the second book of the *Laws*, where one also has a criticism of poetry although perhaps not as harsh as that found here.^{xxxii}

¹ Deleted "to."

^{xxx} Plato *Republic* 603a10-606c1.

^{xxxii} See *Laws* 655b9-657c2.

Session 15: May 21, 1957

Leo Strauss: Since this is the last meeting, I would like to make only a brief concluding remark about our theme. I know that a summary is absolutely impossible, and I can only state a few points which are in my opinion the best summary I could give. The main point: the *Republic* is not a treatise on justice like the fifth book of Aristotle's *Ethics*. This is a work of art. This does not mean that we should sit with gaping mouths enjoying these poetic beauties; it means only that we have to think five times as much as we have to do when we read the fifth book of the *Ethics*. That it is a work of art everyone agrees, but what does "work of art" mean?

When I was young, younger than you are, I heard this story which I regarded as extremely insipid. Only now in my old age have I seen how wise it is. This is the story of the great Greek painter who painted grapes in such a way that the birds came to pick them. He was such a great painter that he deceived the birds.ⁱ This seems to be very silly and it reminded me of the story of President Roosevelt, who didn't understand much of painting and yet was so thrilled about the painting of his wife because the painter succeeded in imitating exactly the color of his wife's hair. For this reason, he found it a perfect painting. Here we have a simple notion of the imitation of nature. But let us try to interpret that simple and insipid story. What does art mean? To imitate nature, obviously. But the second point—which is equally important—is deception, illusion. Of course they are not real grapes but only painted grapes. So we have an imitation of nature and at the same time a delusion. In what does delusion consist? In abstraction from something. In this case we abstract from the three-dimensionality, to say nothing of anything else. If you take a sculpture, which is three dimensional, you abstract from life and motion.

Now from what does a book like Plato's dialogues abstract? Let us be as superficial as we can. He abstracts obviously from visibility. We *hear* stories and even complicated descriptions, but we don't *see* anything. We saw the enormous effort required in today's report in order to make one thing visible. I don't have to tell you that in Plato this little thing, abstraction from visibility, is very rich in meaning. The real things are invisible and not even audible. Non-visibility of the merely audible is a kind of transition. The second point, and one which is more central, is the denial of chance. Everything is necessary. That Socrates had such a strange wife, that he had such a strange nose and eyes, is all meaningful. So the Platonic dialogue as such abstracts from chance, from visibility, and perhaps some other things. But every individual dialogue makes a specific abstraction. This specific abstraction is partly indicated by the setting. For example, when Socrates talks to generalsⁱⁱ and then he talks to young mathematicians,ⁱⁱⁱ he disregards certain things in talking to generals which he does not disregard in talking to young mathematicians, and vice versa. The understanding of every Platonic dialogue means to get a precise notion of that *x* from which he abstracts in the particular dialogue.

ⁱ Strauss refers here to a story about the ancient Greek painter Zeuxis, recounted by Pliny the Elder in *Natural History* 35.36.9-10. Lessing discusses Zeuxis in *Laocoön*, 22.

ⁱⁱ Strauss refers here to Plato's *Laches*, where Socrates converses with the generals Laches and Nicias.

ⁱⁱⁱ Strauss apparently refers here to Plato's *Theatetus*, where Socrates converses with the mathematicians Theatetus (who is young) and Theodorus (who is not young).

I give you one example which is more familiar to me. The dialogue *Euthyphro* is characterized by abstraction from the soul. The word soul doesn't occur in that dialogue. In the moment you think of the soul, you see a problem which you do not see in the dialogue itself. Now in the *Republic*, I would say the thing from which he abstracts is the body. The body is mentioned there, but the body is minimized. And that is the meaning of the communism. The body is that which cannot be possessed in common. The need of these young, maybe still growing, people is also not fulfilled as far as food is concerned. There is an asceticism here. I mentioned also this solid geometry business. Why is this asceticism needed here? For the sake of the city. This is the sacrifice of the individual to the city, that is to say, for other human beings. This is the primary theme of the *Republic* and that is the primary meaning of justice. The desire for such sacrifice which Glaucon and Adeimantus have is a noble passion, but as all passions no matter how noble, it is in need of purification, of *catharsis* as the Greeks said. That is the function of the *Republic*: To appeal and to awaken this passion in the reader—and I think that he does in every reader—and at the same time to purify it, to change its direction from a dimension in which it cannot be fulfilled to a dimension in which it can be fulfilled. In other words, this purification means a change in the meaning of justice. Justice in the highest sense of the term is not sacrificing one's self to the *polis* or others but to take care of one's own soul: philosophy.

What Plato discusses in the *Republic* under the title "justice" is more familiar to us in our language under the title "morality." Morality is a problem in the *Republic*. The fundamental alternatives as we still know them are [these]: morality is non-rational or it is rational. With regard to the former, you know today the favorite doctrines: morality is non-rational and has no substance; it is merely an expression of subjective preferences. Plato takes the opposite stand: morality is rational, but—and this is the difficulty—there is a great ambiguity regarding morality. Is that morality which is rational identical with what we ordinarily understand by morality? Now Plato discovers two roots of justice or morality: one is society, the *polis*; and the other is philosophy, thinking. Both roots lead to more or less the same demands. My habitual example here: if you are a habitual drunk, you are both a bad citizen and a bad thinker. But they are not identical. There are certain rare but important cases in which the demands of thinking and the demands of the *polis* do not coincide and may conflict. But there is a graver problem, a dimension of morality which does not have any rational basis according to the teaching of the *Republic* and which I believe we all regard as terribly important.

Now what does Plato do in the *Republic*? He destroys the family, there is no question about that. This means that incest becomes morally possible. Plato forbids the gravest form of incest between parents and children, but on what ground? On the lowest possible ground, a purely eugenic ground.^{iv} The sacredness or the awe which we connect with this prohibition, and [of] which neither Freud nor anyone has given an adequate account, is completely lost in this process.^v But this is the greatest indication of the problem of morality that this most awe-inspiring prohibition which all civilized nations have regarded very seriously loses its basis. Even when Plato takes up the problem again in the form of the problem family and *polis* (*Statesman*) he gives again a purely utilitarian and political justification. People must marry outside the family, because otherwise the family union will be so close that it will do damage to the political society. Therefore there should be exogamy, and this cannot be maintained (as you

^{iv} *Republic* 458d8-461e4.

^v See Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, chapter 5.

can easily figure out for yourselves) without a strict prohibition against any sexual relations within the family.^{vi} But again this is a purely political consideration. Obviously this is a great problem. The connection with the theme of the *Republic* would be as follows. What is presupposed in all prohibitions, at least as we know them in the West, against incest? They are all prohibitions against intercourse between *blood* relations. The hypothesis of the *Republic* is based on an abstraction from the blood relations. I think it is not too difficult to see how this is connected with an abstraction from the body, because our kinship relations are essentially mediated by the body. That Plato did not favor that transgression of the prohibition against incest I have no doubt. Plato forces us to state the problem of morality in a much clearer way than we otherwise could by making this simple bipartition of body and mind: the body with its needs (food, shelter and so on), [and] society. And society requires certain moral habits. The mind and its needs require certain moral habits. There is an intermediate sphere which is not covered by that, and one could perhaps say that it is precisely this intermediate sphere which does not allow of a utilitarian explanation, which is precisely the sphere of morality as such. So we are left with a great problem.

This brings me to another aspect of the same problem. There are two roots of morality: the *polis* and thinking. And yet there is an amazing convergence between the moral demands of society and the moral demands of thinking. How can we understand that? I give you only one point for your consideration. You have the desires of the body; you have the desires of the mind. These desires are radically different, but both are accompanied by somethingⁱ [distinctive] . . .

vii [which] in man is called the spirited part. So it seems that this spirited part of the soul, of which we have heard so much, is really the link which establishes the unity of man as a mere animal needing food and so on and as a being capable of thinking. Therefore I think the central theme of the *Republic* is really spiritedness. Take Glaucon as an example. The lower part of the soul is called by Plato the desiring part, but he has a higher word for that which he uses on other occasions: eros . . . viii

ⁱ Deleted "negative."

^{vi} Apparently a reference to *Statesman* 308d10a1-311c8.

^{vii} The ellipsis is in the original transcript, which also notes "unintelligible."

^{viii} The original transcriber notes that the lecture was evidently not recorded beyond this point.